



# MARCH Network

Year in Review



2018/2019





**1044**  
Members

**178**  
Early career  
researchers



**439**  
Active Basecamp  
members

**6770**  
Website hits



**1556**  
twitter followers



**11**  
Newsletters


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**300**  
Policy updates  
and opportunities shared



**9**  
ongoing research  
projects

**3000**  
studies in  
WHO arts & health  
review



**45k**  
involved in public  
engagement

**8** Special Interest  
Research Groups

**£21k** Invested in 8 forthcoming  
sandpit events

# Looking Back

## The MARCH Network is 1 year old!

It has been a phenomenal year engaging with over 1,000 researchers, community organisations, policy groups and mental health charities around the country to help transform our understanding of the role of social, cultural and community assets in mental health.

Here's a closer look at what we've accomplished together this year:

1. Our membership now includes over 1,000 people including 93 policy organisations, 330 community groups, 293 researchers, 108 health professionals, 49 mental health charities and 178 early career researchers
2. Our website has had over 7000 hits and our twitter account has 1766 followers and has tweeted 224 times. Our hashtags have made over 23 million twitter impressions
3. We have released 11 newsletters, profiling the work of 60 organisations, 66 grant calls, 114 policy and strategy developments, 76 events and 50 new research papers
4. Basecamp – our online discussion forum – has 439 active members across 110 discussion boards
5. 443 people have joined our 8 special interest groups on topics such as Singing, the Arts, Historic Environment, Books/Libraries and Nature, Outdoors and Mental Health. These groups have collectively hosted 4 events
6. Our Early Career Researcher Steering Group has grown to 45 members, who have supported 6 projects, including 5 blogs and 3 podcasts reaching 500 people
7. We have run citizen science events and experiments including in partnership with the BBC involving over 45,000 people
8. We have completed 5 new research papers (2 published, 3 under review) on participation rates in community activities amongst those with mental illness, barriers and enablers of participation, how community participation affects our emotions, and the role of socio-economic status in moderating the relationship.
9. We have produced an evidence synthesis report for the World Health Organisation on arts and health, reviewing the findings from over 3,000 studies
10. We have invested £21,730 in 8 forthcoming sandpit events





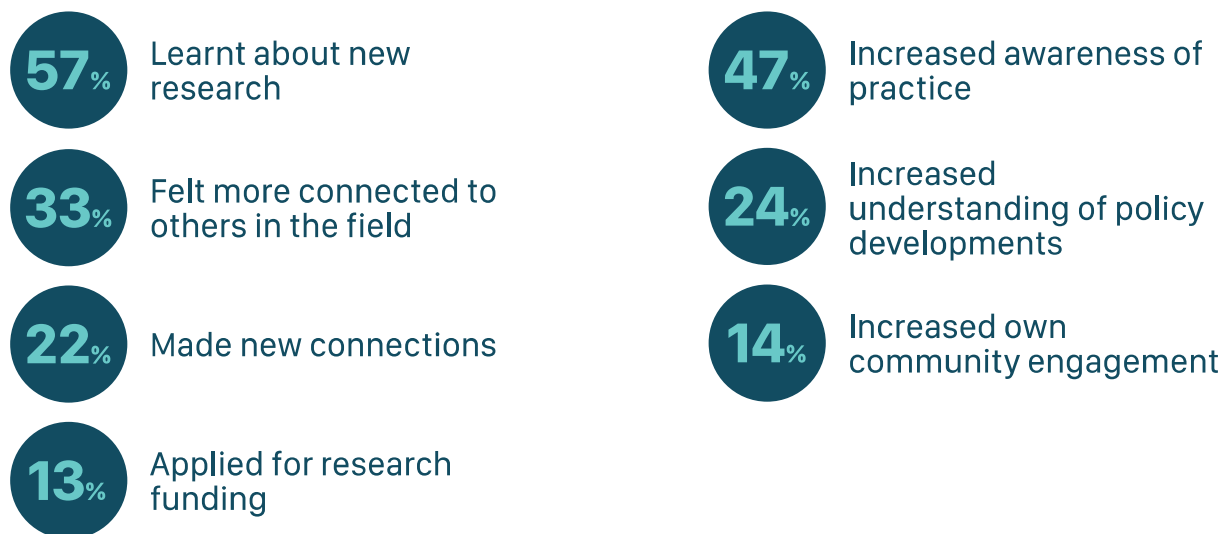
# Our Members' Views

We undertook an evaluation open to all network members. Over a 100 people participated and here is what they said:

## How are members engaging with the network?



## What have MARCH members already gained?



"We have changed our mission statement through being a member of MARCH"

**-Community organisation**

"I recently spoke at a conference and was able to confidently quote research findings"

**-Community artist**

"The SIGs are particularly beneficial for enhanced networking and developing 'satellite' projects"

**-Researcher**

"MARCH has given me a well-rounded understanding of the integration of research and practice to understand the impact this has on policy"

**-Early Career Researcher**

# What we are doing well

## What do people feel is working?

- Members are encouraged to contribute and collaborate – ★★★★★☆
- Members are achieving more together than they could alone – ★★★★★☆
- There are strategic goals and objectives for the network – ★★★★★☆
- Network activities reflect network goals – ★★★★★☆
- The network is creating value for members – ★★★★★☆

## What have been the highlights?

- "Seeing the impact that projects have"
- "Getting and sharing information about policy"
- "Seeing our organisation represented in a newsletter"
- "Listening to the podcasts"
- "Seeing so many people become engaged in this area"
- "The November conference, which was exceptional!"
- "The newsletters, which contain superb material, great articles and super inspiring projects!"



### Dafni Katsampa, Early Career Researcher (ECR)

Being an ECR at Network MARCH makes me feel appreciated, validated and motivated. I have formed a small group of ECRs interested in producing evidence-based blogs, critically appraising evidence and making knowledge accessible in collaboration with the Mental Elf. I also was given the opportunity to participate in social events organised by other ECRs (e.g. workshops, networking events, talks). The work is collaborative and it feels amazing to be a part of such a big team with shared values and interests.



### Debbie Geraghty, Plymouth Music Zone

At Plymouth Music Zone we were delighted to see the MARCH Research Network created as it provided such a resonant articulation of so many areas of our work that we've been delivering in communities for the 20 years. We hadn't realised how much of value we would have to share and indeed how many new opportunities for sharing with others that it would lead to. We've created new contacts with other similar organisations leading to powerful learning exchanges. The MARCH Network has also raised the profile of Plymouth Music Zone's work via newsletters. Our Chief Executive will be interviewed for a MARCH Network podcast early next year to talk more about how we use music to make a difference in people's lives. It's clear that the convening power of the MARCH Network will possibly be one of its greatest assets.

## What we need to work on

**The challenge:** Some members have reported finding the network 'confusing', not being sure 'how it operates and how to engage' and not feeling 'able to join in'.

**How we plan to address it:** We will work on our induction process for new members. We will ensure that when new members sign up, they are briefed on the opportunities available, and ways to get involved. We'll also add an 'information for new members' area on our website.

**The challenge:** A few members said they felt 'nothing has really happened' or they 'don't feel involved', or have 'not received any information'.

**How we plan to address it:** We think our monthly newsletter might be going to spam. In it are details of events, reports, co-produced research, public engagement activities and funding. It arrives on the second Thursday of each month. We will remind members to check their spam folder and alert new members to the newsletter.

**The challenge:** Some members have reported finding our emails 'quite long' or said they would like to 'see at a glance what is going on', or reported that they feel 'overwhelmed with Basecamp emails'

**How we plan to address it:** We will streamline our newsletters, so members can scan for the information they want. We will make the key news each month more visible on the website. We'll also share information on how to reduce the number of Basecamp notifications members receive.

**The challenge:** Some members have reported finding virtual conversations 'difficult to engage with' and asked for 'more opportunities for real conversation' and more 'networking opportunities'

**How we plan to address it:** MARCH is supporting 8 face-to-face sandpit events in the first quarter of 2020, which will bring people together around the UK. We'll be sharing news on how members can get involved in these events. We're also keen to hear from members on their ideas for events and will share information on how we can support.

**The challenge:** Some of our ECR members have asked for more advertising of opportunities specifically for ECRs.

**How we plan to address it:** All of our Plus Funds across 2020 will need to be led or co-led by an ECR, so we anticipate lots of funding opportunities becoming available. We will also start sourcing PhD opportunities under the funding section on our website.



**Henry Aughterson, trainee medic and PhD student**

"I volunteered as an ECR at the MARCH launch a year ago and felt so welcomed into the network that a few months later decided to apply for a PhD with MARCH, taking three years out of medical school. I'm thrilled to say I'm now based at UCL Institute of Epidemiology, doing a PhD around social prescribing and GP community-engagement. I'm also part of the fantastic Early Career Researcher team at MARCH, and have the joy of leading the monthly Podcast, sharing some of the incredible work MARCH members do. This is a community that I am truly grateful for, and proud to be a part of!"

**Shirley Cramer, Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health**

"The leadership of the MARCH Network in initiating and bringing together the evidence on the impact of arts and health could not be more important at this time. With social prescribing now being mainstreamed across the new primary care networks and well evidenced community support being essential to delivering a healthier nation, the network has created a progressive and productive agenda for change."

**Martin Cattermole, Head of Evidence Unit, Personalised Care Group, NHS England and NHS Improvement**

"The commitment of the MARCH network to developing evidence-based approaches to social prescribing is incredibly useful in helping to untangle the issues. The evidence review on Arts and Health just published by the World Health Organisation is a very helpful and a well-timed addition to our knowledge base, showing how taking part in the arts can help maintain physical and mental health, improve social cohesion and reduce inequalities. The Arts on Prescription conference brought together an great bunch of people with lived experience, researchers and people working on initiatives across the country and I learned a huge amount."





# Looking Forwards

## Here is what we have coming up in 2020:

- 8 research-generation sandpit events
- Round table events on interdisciplinary methods
- Presentations of MARCH at several (inter)national conferences
- New opportunities to get involved in MARCH research
- A co-produced published network research agenda
- New evidence synthesis reviews
- A co-produced theory paper on how community engagement affects mental health
- An ECR-led online course on community assets and mental health
- A special issue WHO Panorama journal edition on arts and health
- £258,270 further Plus Funds to be awarded



**Emily Foulkes, Cymaz Music**

"The MARCH Network is a really useful platform for discussing, sharing and reflecting on a wide range of community assets to promote Mental Health and Wellbeing. I have found the information and newsletters to be really useful and have enjoyed contributing to focus groups and to the special interest group on Singing and Mental Health. The MARCH Network feels like a really good way for us to share some of our learning and to be connected with others."



**Lorna Collins, artist, ECR and lived experience representative**

"I joined the MARCH Network as an artist, writer, researcher and person with lived experience. The MARCH Network gives me the opportunity to engage my personal experiences and meet other researchers, practitioners and people with their own lived experience. Together we talk about how to expand the field, make it more accessible, and we ask crucial questions. I feel I am welcomed and valued -- amongst esteemed clinicians and scientists. The MARCH Network has made me feel connected, valued and supported because of my personal experiences, as well as my efforts to research and make some sort of positive impact on the field."





# Projects we've funded

MARCH has funded 8 sandpit events designed to bring together researchers, community organisations, healthcare professionals and individuals with lived experience to develop new research proposals on the following themes:

## **Engagement and Evaluation in Social Prescribing for Mental Health: how do we know we're helping, and helping the right people?**

Liverpool John Moores University

£2.3k

## **The role of social prescribing in addressing the mental well-being of people diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment**

University of Oxford

£2.4k

## **Digital Community Assets and Mental Health**

University of East London

£2.2k

## **Singing and Mental Health**

Royal College of Music

£2.4k

## **Perspectives on frontline arts participation for those with mental health needs**

King's College London

£1.6k

## **An exploration of how assets influence decision making and outcomes of Mental Health Tribunals (AID-Mental Health)**

Nottingham Trent University

£2.2k

## **Nature Connectedness**

University of Derby

£1.6k

## **Archeology and Veteran Mental Health & Wellbeing**

Solent University

£2.4k

# Thank you

Finally, we'd like to say thank you to all of our members for such an engaging first year and to UKRI for funding us.

It is a great privilege and pleasure to be part of MARCH

MARCH is a big network of passionate people who are changing our world for the better

I am inspired by MARCH's work and way of engaging with its members and wider public

MARCH is rewarding, humbling and incredibly beneficial from a personal and professional development point of view

MARCH allows me to feel supported and on the right course in my professional practice

I think it would have been difficult to achieve much more in the first year