



# Resilient Pathway Connections





## Resilient Pathway Connections

### What is it?

*Resilient Pathway Connections* (RPC) is a project that supports cancer survivors in West Yorkshire. RPC is joining forces with Balbir Singh Dance Company (BSDC) to offer a 16-week programme of creative activity alongside existing weekly walks. The Leeds-based dance company will share engaging activities for the group to explore their creativity in new ways.

The group meets each week at 10am at Carr Lodge Park. Everyone can walk at their own pace. The artists from BSDC will join the walks, offering activities and workshops that give participants the chance to join in and to express themselves creatively.



[Above] Participants of the Cancer Survivor's Group, accompanied by BSDC, on one of their weekly Carr Lodge 'Crocodile Walks'



## Who are we?

### Representing Cancer Survivors

Sara Williamson was diagnosed with Stage 3 Breast Cancer in December 2015. Whilst her care plan was originally due to last 12 months, it was ultimately four years before she was finally declared to have "No Evidence of Disease". Sara now devotes her time to various cancer pathways by being active in a number of survivor's groups, sitting on the panel for *Living With and Beyond Cancer* and has also been involved with *Yorkshire Cancer Research* for the last 6 years.

One of Sara's concerns is the lack of information and help that is readily available to those who need it, as it's

been left to people like her to set up groups for people to be able to support each other. With this project, BSDC want to foster your creativity, hear your stories, and strengthen the sense of community that has already been developed amongst various cancer survivor groups.

[Above] Sara Williamson, Group Spokesperson



# Photos from the Crocodile Walks

Carr Lodge Park, Horbury







## Meet Devika Rao

### Project Lead

Devika Rao is a passionate and talented Indian Classical Dance performer with a wealth of experience choreographing and dancing across the globe. She has undertaken many teaching and workshop projects, delivering a high standard of education and giving children and adults access to Indian arts through music and dance.

Devika has been dedicated to teaching Indian classical dance to cancer patients and their caregivers at the Sir

Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre since 2015. These sessions are an integral part of the health and well-being program at the centre. The essence of Indian classical dance, characterised by its grace, rhythmic beauty, and captivating storytelling, has brought immeasurable joy, exercise, and artistic expression to the lives of its participants.



## Devika's previous work with Cancer Survivors

### Working with The Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Group

As lead artist, Devika Rao's Indian dance project represents a unique opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of cancer patients and their caregivers; fostering creativity, resilience, and hope as they navigate the challenges of illness and treatment. These individuals have gone from the chemotherapy room to the performance stage, showcasing their new talent to an audience of over 200 people.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, dance sessions adapted a new approach to engaging in outdoor activities during the summertime. These sessions have become an essential part of what many now call their "new normal" life. Participants range from those with full-time jobs to retirees, with the eldest being 80 years old and the youngest 35.

The project focuses on creative expression through various art forms to give new meaning and perspective to life in the moment, both reflectively and future facing, providing continued creative growth for what

it means to be human and celebrating the human condition. The work is collaborative with the artists to find a common creative dialogue and creative connection. The holistic benefits encompass not only physical health, but also emotional and social dimensions, contributing to an improved quality of life for all those involved.

### Project Goals:

- Continue Healing and well-being sessions
- Community Support
- Diverse Creative Activities
- Documentation and Outreach
- Structured Programme





## Meet Balbir Singh Dance Company

### Project Lead

Founded in 1998 by Balbir Singh, BSDC has grown to be a leading dance company that specialises in blending contemporary western dance and classical Indian Kathak. Based in Leeds, the company regularly works with the best artists and musicians to present work to diverse audiences in the UK and internationally.

Central to BSDC's approach is a belief in

culturally diverse learning and participation. The company is well known for delivering innovative programmes that inspire; encouraging individuals, groups and communities to engage further with the arts and leaving a lasting impression on all participants.



## BSDC's previous work with Chronic Pain

### Our Fuse Award-winning initiative: 'Unmasking Pain'

The pilot stage of Unmasking Pain was a project run by BSDC, in conjunction with a number of collaborators (See Right), that seeks to bring together those who suffer from chronic pain with pain specialists and artists so that they can partake in sessions designed to help them identify the challenges that come with living with pain.

BSDC is aware that, often, linear systems are not a suitable way to express your pain. A Doctor might ask you how much it hurts on a 'scale of 1-10', or where exactly in your body you can feel the pain. But as people with chronic pain will know, it isn't always that simple. So BSDC set out to be able to give a voice to these people. The idea behind the project was that through your own creativity, as well as that of an artist, you would be able to tell the story of your pain. If you could draw your pain, how might it look? How would you talk to yourself if you had your own puppet sitting across from you?

There was a lot of learning when it came to people telling us their stories. Some people felt comfortable sharing in front of a group, whereas we found that others worked better on a 1-1 basis. This is something we tried to foster; the idea that people would be able to voice their stories in their own way, using methods that felt comfortable to them, and in doing so they were able to find their own creativity and give voice to their frustrations.

### Project Collaborators:

- Durham University & Prof. Paul Chazot
- Leeds Beckett University
- Live Well with Pain
- Space2





## Applying the experience to a science and research driven approach

### Leeds Beckett University's Phenomenology Study

One of the major outcomes of *Unmasking Pain* was the Phenomenology Study run by Professor Mark Johnson at Leeds Beckett University, titled:

*Pain through the perspective of art and creativity: insights from the Unmasking Pain project.*

The Study itself gives a strong scientific basis for developing the work further. This is something we're interested in exploring further with this current project: *Resilient Pathway Connections*.

The opportunity to take part in the study regarding *Resilient Pathway Connections* will be optional, but anyone interested in taking part will be instrumental in helping to develop a further scientific insight into how creativity can help us understand pain and aid your health and well-being.

If you would like to read the Phenomenology Study that was done as part of *Unmasking Pain* then you can find it here:



Or visit:  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpain.2023.1179116/full>







## Dance and Movement Workshops

With Devika Rao and Kali Chandrasegaram

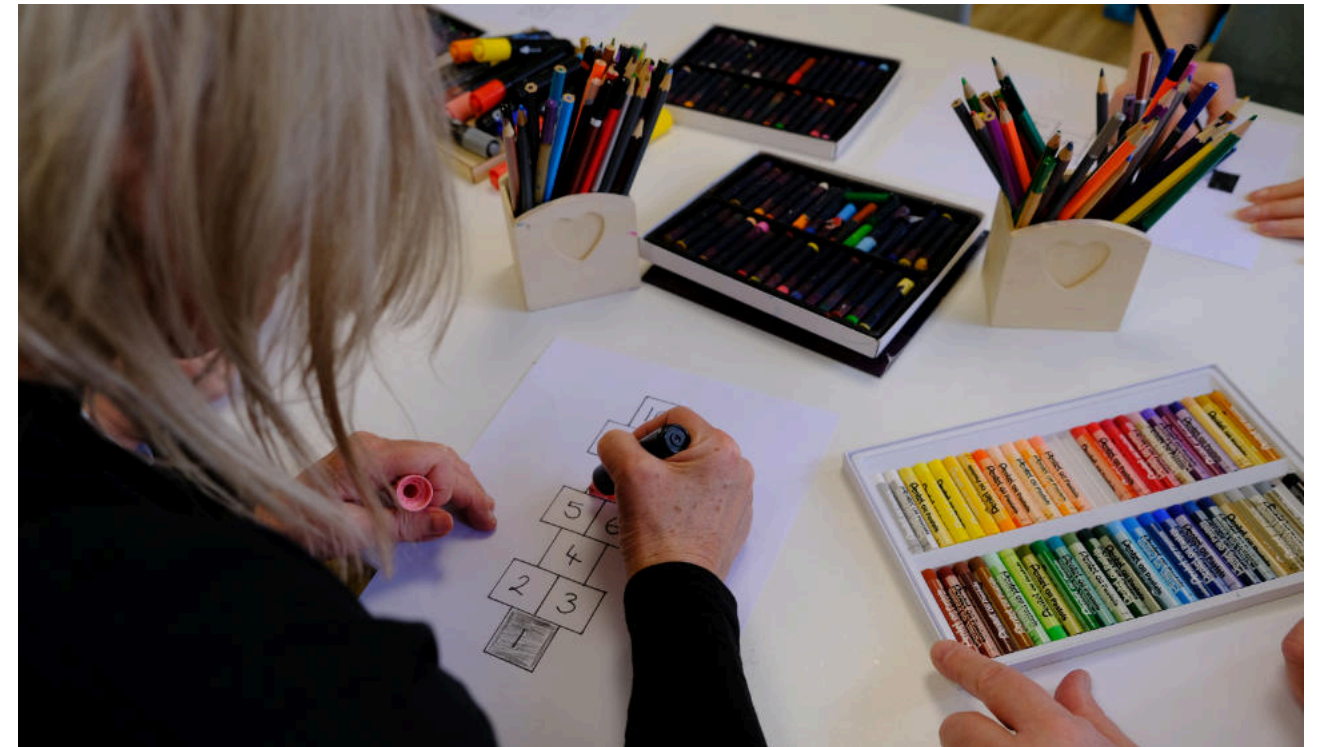






## Poetry and Visual Art Workshops

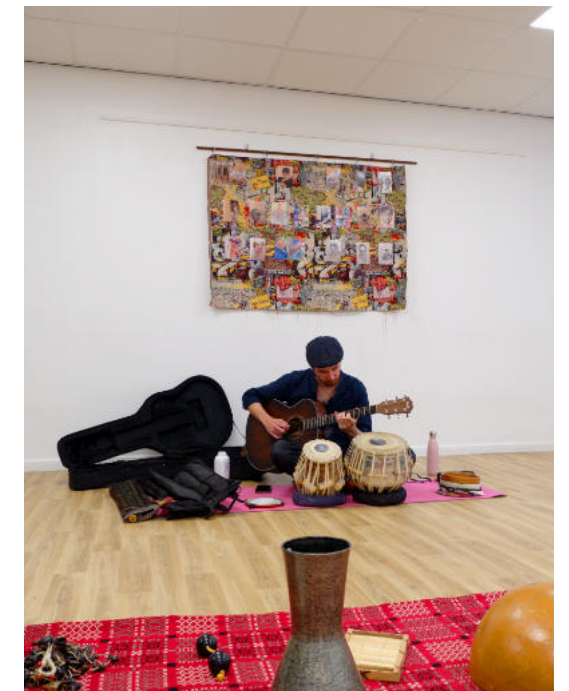
With Adam Strickson and Louise Grassby





# Music Workshops

With Ford Collier



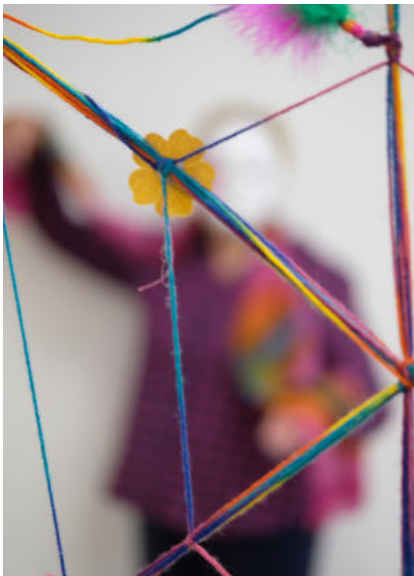


# Interactive Photography Workshops

With Gavin Joynt









# Interactive Sound Workshop

With Prof. Nikos Stavropoulos and Prof. Mark Johnson from Leeds Beckett Uni.







[Above] Sara Williamson speaking at Devika's Annual Day Showcase 2024

## Spreading the word about the Project

### And weaving it through our work

Creative Health and Wellbeing is a large part of our work at BSDC, and there is often a shared interest between a number of projects that we are working on. Here are some of the recent scenarios where we have spoken about and championed *RPC*.



[Above] Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, London



[Above] Presentation for the Royal Society of Medicine



[Above] University of Cumbria - Screening of the 'Resilient Pathway Connections' film



[Above] Gledhow Valley Wood Fashion Show, Leeds, which involved Breast Cancer Survivors



[Above] ISEMPH Conference Day

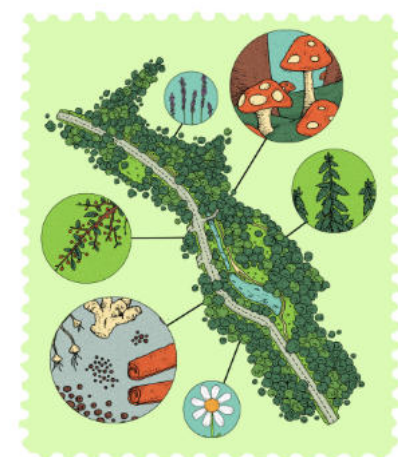


[Above] A request from Mark Dean, shared with colleagues in the Cancer Alliance





Jay  
 Flitting from branch to branch I spy  
 you.  
 Your electric blue flashes  
 Your brown camouflaging  
 As if you're conflicted whether you  
 want to parade or hide away.  
 Hush  
 Perched atop you survey.  
 Cackling the heights,  
 Chairing your screeching song.  
 Today's a Jay Day,  
 So lay your eyes to the skies, and  
 pause.



### The Flavours of the Trees

Fill your senses with the smell and taste of the forest, make tasty  
 tea from the nettles that grow here, or enjoy the aroma of sweet  
 buttercups that spring from the earth.



### A Dancer's Route

Feel the movement of life through the dancers map, mirroring  
 the flow of our bodies with the elements of the Earth.



### For Young Explorers

The woods are a magical place for children, allow your  
 imagination to take you on playful journeys through the  
 enchanting pathways Gledhow.

## Previous examples of our creative output

### What might we create?

Here are some examples of creative outputs from previous projects that we have run. The images above are from the recent 'Routes and Roots' project. This involved a number of walks through Gledhow Valley Woods in Leeds, with some focusing on a specific creative approach. Some walks were based around concepts, such as 'Taking your finger for a walk', whilst others explored what the woodland inspired within you.

On the opposite page, we have some masks that were made for a previous project we pioneered called 'Unmasking Pain'. The masks were intended to be a reflection of how Chronic Pain sufferers live in their day to day lives. On the outside, we see a 'normal' face, whilst the interior is layered full of rough and sharp objects, in a bid to demonstrate how painful and all-encompassing chronic pain can be.



[Opposite] A selection of outcomes from 'Routes and Roots', featuring illustrations from Gledhow Valley Wood, poetry based upon the wood, and maps of the woods themselves

[Top] Masks that were made to represent the sufferer's pain, from 'Unmasking Pain'  
 [Bottom] A shop exhibition in Huddersfield, setup as part of 'Unmasking Pain'





## Going forwards

### Supporting the Project

Over the coming months, we're excited to bring this project to life, and to help develop new creative outlets for the participants.

If you think that you might be interested in joining the group and participating in the 16-week programme you can find the appropriate contact information here. We look forward to seeing you!

Interested in participating?

Get in touch at either:

[alphie.bsdc@gmail.com](mailto:alphie.bsdc@gmail.com)

[sara-williamson@lineone.net](mailto:sara-williamson@lineone.net)





