



# Creativity, connection and wellbeing: An Evaluation of Discovery Arts

**Final**

Emma Insley

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 About Discovery Arts

Discovery Arts is three linked programmes delivered with and/or by Culture Shift that use creativity to support children and young people's mental wellbeing through free, short and informal courses that are delivered after school/college within schools, community and cultural venues across East Sussex. The Discovery Arts programme includes:

- **Discovery College arts courses:** Culture Shift has partnered with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to support Discovery College's arts courses, a range of eight-week creative wellbeing courses delivered in cultural venues and community spaces. Courses have been co-produced by creative and mental health practitioners, as well as young people with lived experience of mental health challenges. Arts Council England is the primary funder of the arts programme.
- **Telling Your Story:** Culture Shift's creative wellbeing programme delivered in secondary schools with similar objectives to Discovery College, funded by BBC Children in Need.
- **Space to Create:** Culture Shift's creative wellbeing programme delivered in primary schools, also funded by BBC Children in Need.

Additional funds have been raised through East Sussex Covid Recovery funds for both Discovery College and Telling Your Story, and arts partners have also raised their own funds to deliver Discovery College's arts courses.

Courses evaluated ran from September 2020 to February 2023, mostly online in year one (because of the national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and a combination of online and in-person in year two. See Appendix 1 for a list of courses delivered and evaluated.

## 1.2 About the Evaluation

Insley Consulting was commissioned by Culture Shift to conduct a two-year independent evaluation of the three Discovery Arts programmes to answer the evaluation questions outlined in section 1.3. This report builds on a year 1 evaluation report (*A Safe Space for Creative Expression and Connection*, Insley Consulting, 2021).

## 1.3 Key research questions

The research questions answered through the evaluation are:

1. **To what extent have the project outcomes been achieved?**
2. **How has change been achieved**, including:
  - What are the specific benefits of the co-production process on young people and professionals participating in Discovery College arts courses, and to what extent has this contributed towards their experience and outcomes achieved?

## INTRODUCTION

- What have been the specific benefits of different spaces on young people's experiences, and to what extent have they contributed towards outcomes achieved?
- 3. **Have there been any unintended consequences of the service?**
- 4. **What are the characteristics of the young people** who have engaged with Discovery Arts programmes? Did they reach their intended groups?
- 5. **How should the service develop in future to meet the needs of children and young people?**

### 1.4 Evaluation methods

#### 1.4.1 Design of evaluation methods

Co-production is an essential part of the Discovery College approach, so an Evaluation Steering Group was formed, including Discovery College mental health practitioners, Culture Shift and three young people with lived experience of mental health challenges. Through two online workshops, members of the Evaluation Steering Group contributed to developing a Monitoring & Evaluation Framework (see Appendix 2), an Evaluation Plan and the design of the Evaluation Toolkit.

#### 1.4.2 Methods used to evaluate Discovery College arts courses and Telling Your Story

To provide a strong evidence base for the evaluation of the Discovery College arts programme, we used a mixed-methods approach and triangulated data by capturing quantitative and qualitative evidence from the following sources:

1. **Pre- and post-course (distance travelled) survey with wellbeing scales:** We used the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and three domains of the ONS Wellbeing Scale (happiness, satisfaction with life and doing things in life that are worthwhile) within a pre- and post-course survey, see Appendix 3.
2. **Young people's journal:** We created an evaluation journal for young people to complete (online initially, and then a printed version) as they progressed through the course.
3. **Observations by facilitators:** We captured qualitative and quantitative evidence through observations by facilitators of the outcomes achieved by participants.
4. **Interviews:** Mental health practitioners conducted semi-structured interviews with three young people who attended Discovery College arts courses and four parents (see Appendix 4 for questions). We also drew on informal discussions with eight young people at the Discovery College celebration event called 'A Voice That's Mine'.
5. **Six Focus groups:** We conducted six focus groups with creative and mental health practitioners who co-facilitated Discovery College arts courses (see Appendix 5 for questions).

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We utilised three of the five evaluation tools (wellbeing scales, journal and facilitator observations) for Telling Your Story courses, which have similar objectives to Discovery College arts courses. See section 5.2 for an overview of how Space to Create courses were evaluated using age-appropriate tools and methods.

Summary findings of outcomes and key quality measures have been included for each programme, colour coded according to the strength of evidence gathered through the evaluation:

Outcome achieved	Outcome partly achieved	Outcome in progress
75%+ of respondents achieved	50-74% of respondents achieved	Fewer than 50% of respondents achieved

### 1.4.3 Response rates to self-evaluation data

We received at least one form of self-evaluation data from 289 young people (84% of participants), detailed in Table 1.

Programme	Participants	% with distance travelled surveys	% with journal received	% with Blob Tree received	% with outcomes wheel
Discovery College arts programme	144	35%	50%	N/A	N/A
Telling your Story	83	55%	55%	N/A	N/A
Space to Create	118	N/A	N/A	71%	86%
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>70%</b>

Table 1 - Response rates to self-evaluation data

### 1.4.4 Appraisal of evaluation methods

**Response rates:** Responses to surveys and journals were higher in year two than in year one, aided by year two courses being delivered in-person, so facilitators could collect responses from young people on paper directly. However, only 35% of Discovery College arts programme participants and 55% of Telling Your Story participants completed pre- and post-course (distance travelled) data, so the number of responses is still lower than we would have liked. This is related to attendance numbers – if young people did not attend the first or last session, it was very difficult to receive their evaluation data.

**Facilitators' engagement with evaluation tools:** Qualitative evidence indicates that facilitators had different approaches to evaluation tools. Some said that they thought evaluation forms disrupted the flow of sessions, whilst one facilitator found the evaluation journals as a helpful tool to help young people identify what they wanted to get out of the course, reflect on how

## INTRODUCTION

far they had come and record things they were proud of; completing the journal became part of the rhythm of session delivery for this group.

**Overview of methods:** The evaluation methods designed provided well-rounded data that enabled us to make a thorough appraisal of the difference the programme had made to young people individually and as a group. In Year two we set up a dashboard of results through AirTable, which gave a good overview of data at individual, course and programme levels.

It was not appropriate to set up a control group to evaluate the programme, so results are not part of a Randomised Control Trial (the gold standard of evaluation data). We address how evaluation methods can be strengthened and simplified when programmes are self-evaluated by Discovery College and Culture Shift going forward (see section 3.4.10).

Going forward, stronger digital systems should be developed by Discovery College to track registrations, attendance, survey responses and outcomes achieved, ideally linked to a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, with results visible to programme leads to support Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning.

**Recommendation 1:** Strengthen digital systems for Discovery College to be able to monitor registrations, attendance, survey response rates, outcomes achieved and young people's feedback, and learn from this data on an ongoing basis.

### 1.5 About the author



Emma Insley is the Director of Insley Consulting and helps third sector organisations to make a sustained impact. She brings data and stories of change to life and helps clients to think strategically about how to focus on the things that make the biggest difference to increase their impact.

Emma is a former CEO of two charities. She has written numerous Evaluations, including for FareShare UK, Parkinson's UK, MS Society, Young Lives vs Cancer and Depaul UK. She lives in Battle in East Sussex.

### 1.6 Report structure

Chapter 2 provides the evaluation context, including an overview of young people's mental health and changing provisions for their support. Chapters 3 - 5 look at each programme in detail, with Discovery College arts courses evaluated in Chapter 3, Telling Your Story in Chapter 4 and Space to Create in Chapter 5. Each of these chapters has its own conclusions about the respective programmes, including an appraisal of their contribution towards the outcomes achieved. Chapters 6 - 8 include acknowledgements, references and appendices.

### 2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Young people's mental health in the UK

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, one in nine young people aged 6-16 and one in ten aged 17-19 were likely to develop a mental health disorder (NHS, 2021). Access to mental health support for children and young people in the UK was already a cause for concern – according to Barnardo's (2020), an estimated two-thirds (approximately 550,000) of children and young people in England with diagnosable mental health conditions were not expected to receive treatment by 2020-21.

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic had a severe impact on this group. Early on, in March 2020, 80% of young people aged 13-24 surveyed by Young Minds reported Covid-19 had made their mental health worse. According to another survey by Barnardo's (2020), one-third of young people aged 8-24 said they had experienced increased mental health and wellbeing challenges including stress, loneliness and worry. The research pointed to this being caused by both the pandemic and the measures to contain it, namely lockdowns and school closures.

The impact of Covid-19 remained severe throughout 2021, with 68% of young people with mental health problems saying their mental health declined since the first national lockdown. Almost a third (32%) of young people reported self-harming to cope, compared to 14% of adults (Mind, 2021).

As expected, the effects of coronavirus and lockdowns seem to have lasted beyond the most critical pandemic period. Research now points to one in six young people aged 6-19 likely developing a mental health challenge (NHS, 2021). Despite subjective wellbeing appearing to have recovered close to pre-pandemic levels, anxiousness among primary and secondary-age pupils has worsened and is higher than in 2020/21 (Department for Education, 2022).

#### 2.2 Young people's mental health in East Sussex

On a local level, pre-pandemic it was estimated that there were 9,635 children and young people (aged 5-17) experiencing mental health challenges in East Sussex in 2017/18 (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023). According to the Sussex Health and Care Partnership (2021), 11.8% of children and young people aged 2-19 in the county have a mental health diagnosis. Additionally, in June 2019, 2,994 children were being supported by Social Care with input from Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and local emotional wellbeing services (Sussex Health and Care Partnership, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children and young people in Sussex is in line with national reports. According to a Sussex-wide survey of young people aged 13-25 by Young Healthwatch Brighton and Hove (2020), the biggest challenges relate to not being able to see family, friends and loved ones (reported by 40.8%) and mental health problems



## EVALUATION CONTEXT

(reported by 24.8%). Factors identified as contributing to the deterioration of mental health included lack of social interaction, difficulties accessing mental health support for pre-existing conditions during the lockdown and maintaining a routine while schools/colleges/universities were closed.

Post-pandemic, a slightly higher percentage of school-age pupils is reported to have social, emotional and mental health needs in East Sussex (3%) than in England as a whole (2.8%) and this is rising. Hospital admissions due to self-harm for young people aged 10-24 in the same local area are also increasing (625.9 per 100,000), which is the third worst rate in the South East (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023).

The need for specialist community mental health services has also risen significantly in Sussex, with a 32% increase in average monthly referrals to CAMHS between October 2020 and May 2021 compared to the previous year. Both the number of people waiting for CAMHS services and the number of Mental Health A&E attendances for 0-17-year-olds have increased (34% and 14% respectively) (Sussex Health and Care Partnership, 2021).

### 2.3 Changing local provision of mental health support for young people

The 2021-22 Sussex Children and Young People's Mental health and Emotional Wellbeing Plan, developed by Sussex Health and Care Partnership<sup>1</sup>, outlines how mental health services for children and young people will be delivered in future, incorporating the national needs based THRIVE Framework, see Figure 1.

Part way through the Discovery Arts programme, additional investment was made into Discovery College and Recovery College staffing, with new posts created for administration, peer working and clinical working and a new Head of Recovery and Discovery College.



Figure 1 - THRIVE Framework

Culture Shift's involvement is thought to have partly influenced the increased NHS investment in the programme as the new website and additional courses helped Discovery College to become more visible, which helped to drive the need for increased capacity.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2022/06/CYP-Local-Transformation-Plan.pdf>



# Discovery College arts courses in numbers

Discovery College provides a range of free courses in East Sussex to help young people deal with mental health challenges. Creative courses have been delivered in partnership with Culture Shift and a range of other arts organisations. Each course is co-produced with mental health practitioners, artists and young people with lived-experience of mental health challenges.

126 Young people supported

19 Courses evaluated

144 Course places filled

"It helped me realise that other people were feeling the same as me and loved listening and playing music as much as I do."

MUSIC SPEAKS PARTICIPANT



of young people felt supported and valued through their course

## Course locations in East Sussex



49% Had a meaningful increase in wellbeing (using Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)



1.4 Statistically significant 1.4-point increase in wellbeing



85% Felt the course helped them to get on and work with other young people



63% Felt more connected to others



61% Felt more confident



73% Achieved the goal that they set for themselves



"It helped me to be more myself, talk to people and make new friends."

DISCOVERY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT

### 3. DISCOVERY COLLEGE ARTS COURSES

#### 3.1 About the Discovery College arts courses

Discovery College provides a range of free courses for young people aged 12-20 to help them deal with mental health challenges they may be experiencing. Courses are run after school or college, from 4-6pm or 5-7pm. A core part of the Discovery College offer is the arts programme, which has included a range of creative courses on topics including photography, music, street art, digital skills, creative writing, drawing, painting and animation.

All arts courses are co-produced by young people with lived experience of mental health challenges, artists and mental health practitioners. Discovery College was initially piloted in 2015 by staff within CAMHS to deliver wellbeing and resilience-building courses to complement CAMHS' talking therapies. Young people that had been involved in art projects largely delivered by the participation lead in CAMHS had recognised the value of creative courses in their journey to better manage their mental health and relate to people in groups.

Culture Shift has supported Discovery College since April 2020 to build capacity and extend the offer and reach of the Discovery College art programme by bringing in new arts partners, supporting co-production training and engaging young people in designing a website.

#### 3.2 Reach and young people's engagement

##### 3.2.1 *Extended geographical reach*

Before funding was received from Arts Council England, Discovery College courses were delivered solely in Eastbourne. Since funding has enabled Culture Shift to bring in new arts partners and increase capacity, courses are now run across East Sussex, including St. Leonards, Hastings, Bexhill, Eastbourne, Newhaven and Lewes.

##### 3.2.2 *Artists involved*

14

artists involved in Discovery College arts courses from 11 arts organisations

Funding has enabled Culture Shift to bring 14 artists from 11 different arts organisations to co-facilitate Discovery College arts courses.

##### 3.2.3 *Number of participants*

126

young people participated in 19 Discovery College arts courses evaluated

**144** participant places filled, an average of 7.6 participants per course

Around 126 unique young people participated in 19<sup>2</sup> Discovery College arts courses between October 2020 and February 2023, broken down by course in Figure 2. Of these, around 18 were returning attendees, meaning 144 participant places were filled by young people, an average of 7.6 participants per course. The most popular courses were Designing Together (web design), Music Speaks, PhotoClub and Street Art, with 10 or 11 participants each.

The number of young people engaged in courses is less than hoped, largely because of the national lockdown requiring online delivery in year one, but also because of the vulnerability of young people involved and their declining mental health and isolation due to Covid-19.

Registration records show that around 183 participants were registered for Discovery College arts courses (although this would include some young people who registered for more than one course). From these records, it is estimated that around 39 young people (21%) did not go on to attend a course, despite mental health practitioners making contact with parents/carers once a young person had registered.

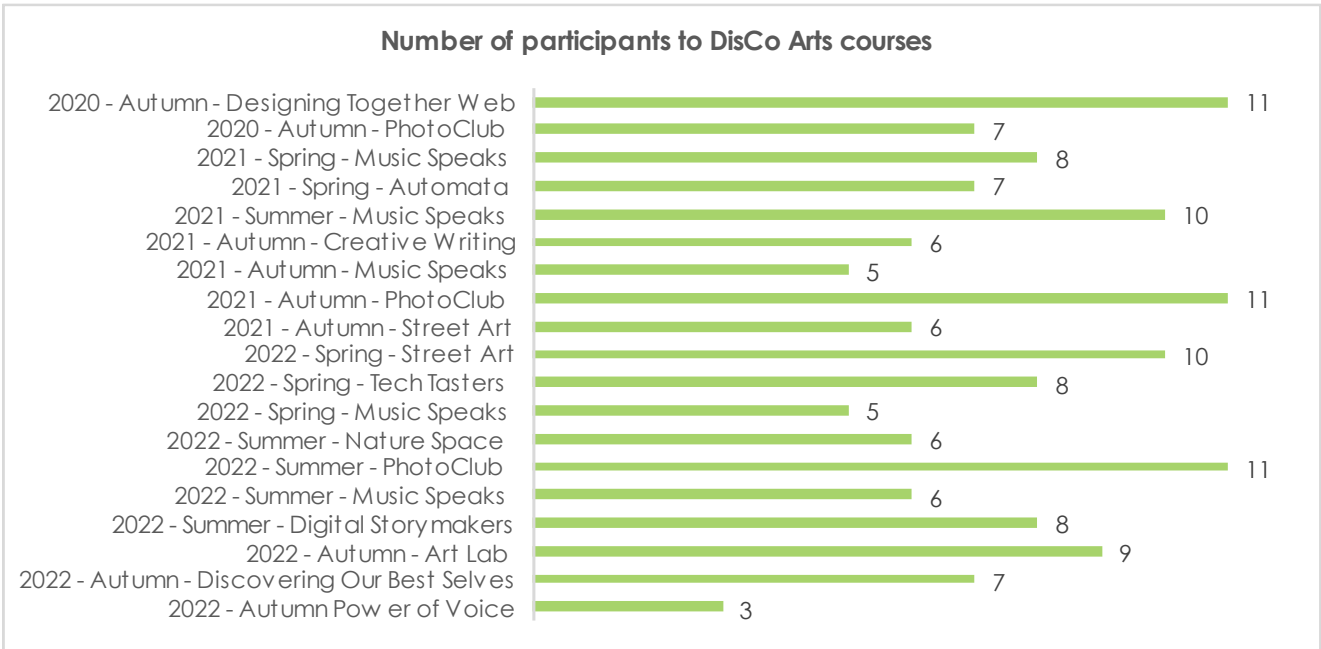


Figure 2 - Number of Discovery College arts course participants recorded on Observation Sheets

Young people are often signposted to Discovery College by CAMHS, the Early Help Keywork Service, schools and through word of mouth. The Discovery College Clinical Co-ordinator suggested that the optimal number of participants for group support is eight, which is the

<sup>2</sup> One course (Power of Voice in 2022) has not been evaluated as it was cancelled part-way through due to bereavement, although participant numbers are included above.

average number of people who attended each Discovery College arts course. However, as outlined below, session attendance was lower (an average of 4.5 young people per session), so until this increases, it is recommended that Discovery College seeks to recruit 10-12 young people to each course (depending on the nature of the space available), aiming for an average of eight participants for each session.

Creative practitioners thought that courses could be promoted more widely by creating a video and reaching out to more agencies that are likely to be supporting young people's mental wellbeing.

**Recommendation 2:** Courses should be promoted more widely through targeted local recruitment with schools and partners, as well as social media to attract more participants (around 10-12 for each course).

### 3.2.4 Attendance

**58%** average attendance rate of Discovery College arts courses, an average of 4.5 young people per session.

The attendance rate to Discovery College arts courses, at an average of 58% across all courses<sup>3</sup> or an average of 4.5 young people per session, is lower than partners would have liked (see Figure 3 for a course breakdown). Facilitators thought that this was because participants were often experiencing or recovering from mental health challenges, young people feeling tired after a long day at school or college (courses are typically run in the evenings), plus the practicalities of family life meant that parents were sometimes unable to bring participants to sessions.

It should be noted that the attendance rate for Telling Your Story courses (which operate on a similar model but within schools) was higher at 68% (see section 4.2.3). This may be because Telling Your Story courses are bolted on to the end of a school day and delivered within school and are therefore logistically easier for young people to attend.

Figure 3, over, shows the breakdown of attendance per course. Digital Storymakers, had the highest attendance rate (at 88%); this may be because it was delivered during school holidays. The outcomes that young people can achieve may be hindered if they have a low attendance rate, so Discovery College should experiment with different approaches to encourage greater attendance. This could include partnering with schools and experimenting

<sup>3</sup> Total no. of sessions attended by participants / (no. of participants x no. of sessions)

## DISCOVERY COLLEGE ARTS COURSES

with delivery at weekends and during school holidays (whilst also considering the impact that this is likely to have on facilitators).

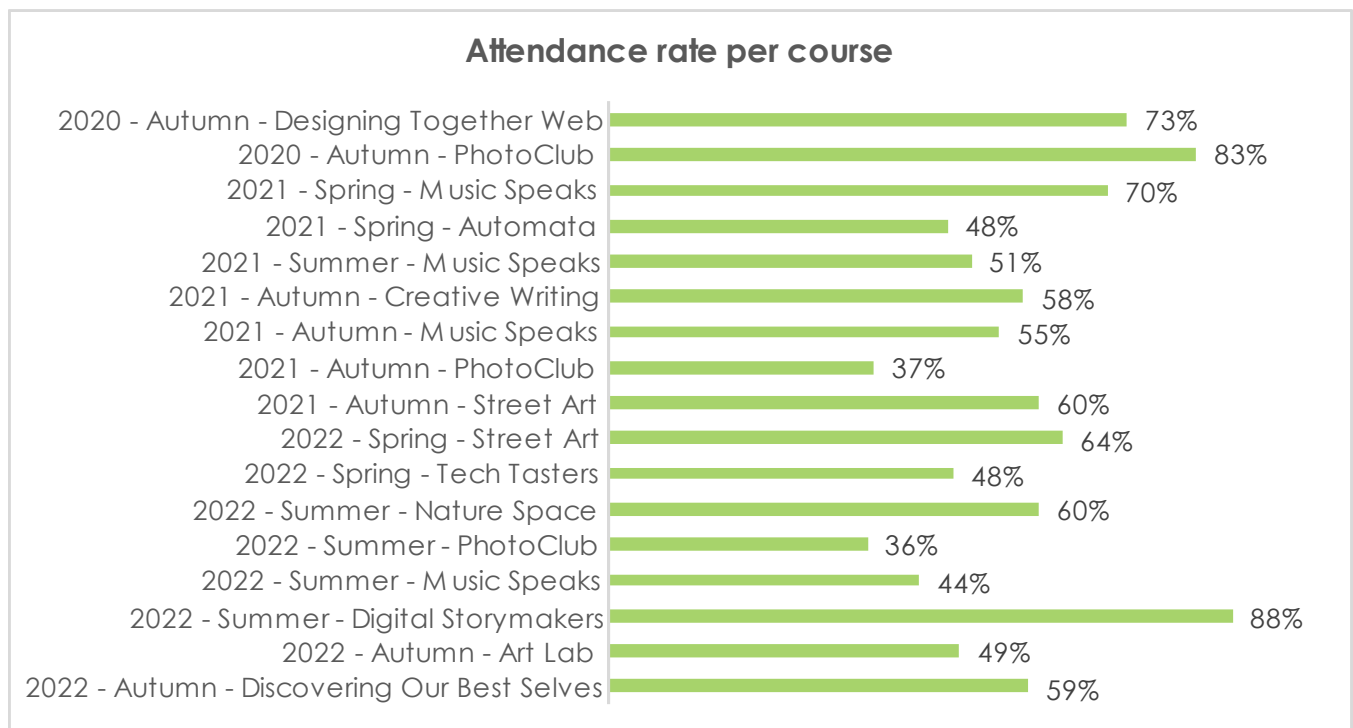


Figure 3 - Attendance rate per course (Discovery College arts courses)

**Recommendation 3:** Experiment with different approaches to when and where courses are delivered, including school holidays and potentially weekends, and monitor if this has an impact on attendance rates.

### 3.2.5 Characteristics of young people engaged

#### Mental wellbeing at the start

**73%** of participants in Discovery College arts courses had low mental wellbeing before participating in a course

**Discovery College arts courses are effectively reaching people who need support with their mental health and wellbeing;** 73% of participants had low mental wellbeing before starting Discovery College arts courses. Wellbeing levels were assessed using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS); see section 3.4.1 for a breakdown of scores before and after courses.

### 3.3 How effectively the programme was delivered

#### 3.3.1 Effectiveness of co-production and co-facilitation

One of the unique aspects of Discovery College arts courses is that each is co-produced and delivered by a mental health practitioner, creative practitioner and young person with lived experience of mental health challenges (called a Peer Mentor or Peer Trainer) who *“work together as a trio to make sure everyone is equally included and can be themselves.”* However, the group of three facilitators is often a different combination of people for each course, which means that team dynamics needed to be established each time.

18 facilitators received training in co-production, described as *“brilliant”* by one mental health practitioner (see section 3.4.6 for further details on the difference this made to clinical and creative practice). The facilitators involved in focus groups thought that the approach to co-production and facilitation broadly worked well, providing the right balance of support, empathy and creativity.

*“So, we had all these different skills; none of us had worked together [before] but something happened when we worked together. [The process] was very energized.”*

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

During sessions, participants are given choices about the activities they would be doing and how they might like to approach a particular creative medium. Facilitators approached sessions in a reflective and open way, with some offering a ‘sharing circle’ at the end of sessions to reflect on how it had gone, to help young people *“own the programme and its content”*.

Peer Mentors, most of whom are previous participants of Discovery College courses, felt that their experience as a mentor also benefited them and their own mental health recovery.

*“I feel like I've journeyed with them as young people, as a young person myself, and just getting to watch people grow and develop and actually do some amazing things sometimes in spite of what's going on around them.”*

PEER MENTOR

*“I've definitely found a bit more of my voice, but I felt I've gained the skills needed to learn to share my story in a safe way with people, and so it's made a difference in myself.”*

PEER MENTOR

Peer Mentors receive in-house training, which is co-produced with a Peer Trainer. They can also do a free Level 2 or 3 Education and Training qualification. Despite the high level of

training and support, one facilitator thought that a Peer Mentor was not yet ready to support their course:

*“I didn't think that our peer mentor was ready to be a mentor... the more we were trying to make space for him to bring something, the more he was just retreating ... I felt that they would benefit from shadowing [a Peer Mentor] who has a bit more experience so that they could see what co-production and co-facilitation looks like.”*

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER

The Discovery College Clinical Co-ordinator thought that the Creative Practitioner may have misunderstood the expectations of Peer Mentors who support participants in sessions by bringing their expertise of experience, whereas Peer Trainers (who have received a higher level of training) can lead the facilitation of sessions. The Discovery College Clinical Co-ordinator recognised the importance of briefing creative practitioners specifically on the co-production approach and process and not just partner arts organisations, as the message may not always filter down to individual practitioners.

A Peer Training and Support Pathway is currently being co-produced by Discovery College to look at the training and support needs of Peer Mentors and Peer Trainers going forward, which should also help to better prepare peers and avoid any future misalignment of expectations.

A few Creative Practitioners felt that the courses were too short to be *“true co-production”*, particularly as each course typically began with a new team of facilitators. At eight weeks in length, some facilitators felt that they and the participants were just getting going when the course ended and that the time invested in planning, co-production and evaluation would be better balanced if courses were longer. We address course length in section 3.4.10.

See section 3.4.6 for how co-production training and delivery has evolved and improved throughout the project.

**Recommendation 4:** Continue to develop a stronger and more consistent approach to Discovery College's co-production work so that peers are confident in their role, expectations are shared, facilitators have time to get to know their colleagues and plan the course before it begins, with a proportionate amount of protected planning and reflection time between sessions.



**3.3.2 Young people's feedback**

Net Promoter Score

<b>25</b>	Discovery College Net Promoter Score
<b>8</b>	average satisfaction rating (out of 10)

Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a measure of customer satisfaction, which asks: 'How likely is it that you would recommend Discovery College arts courses to a friend?' rated on a scale of 0-10. Respondents are categorised based on their score as either 'promoters' (9-10), 'passives' (7-8) or 'detractors' (0-6). The NPS is calculated by subtracting the proportion of 'detractors' from 'promoters'. Creators of NPS, Bain & Company, suggest a score of 20 or above is favourable, 50 or above is excellent, and above 80 is world-class.

Discovery College arts courses have a favourable Net Promoter Score of 25 (see Figure 4). Although almost half (43%) of the 53 respondents scored Discovery College 9 or 10 (out of 10), 19% (10 respondents) gave a score of 6 or less. The average score was 8 out of 10.

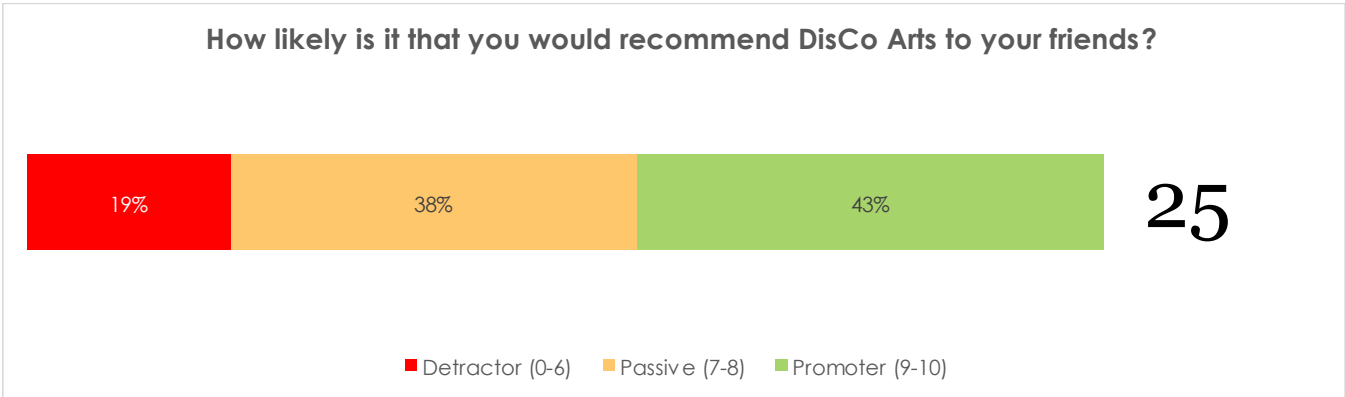


Figure 4 - Net Promoter Score for Discovery College arts courses (n=53)

The analysis of participant satisfaction by course is outlined in Table 2.

Year	Term	Course name	Average score out of 10	No. of responses
2020	Autumn	Designing Together Web	9	2
2020	Autumn	PhotoClub	8	5
2021	Spring	Music Speaks	7	1
2021	Spring	Automata	-	0
2021	Summer	Music Speaks	9	4

## DISCOVERY COLLEGE ARTS COURSES

Year	Term	Course name	Average score out of 10	No. of responses
2021	Autumn	Creative Writing	7	3
2021	Autumn	Music Speaks	8	4
2021	Autumn	PhotoClub	10	4
2021	Autumn	Street Art	9	4
2022	Spring	Street Art	8	6
2022	Spring	Tech Tasters	8	4
2022	Spring	Music Speaks	9	3
2022	Summer	Nature Space	8	4
2022	Summer	PhotoClub	-	0
2022	Summer	Music Speaks	-	0
2022	Summer	Digital Story Makers	7	5
2022	Autumn	Art Lab	-	0
2022	Autumn	Discovering Our Best Selves	9	4

Table 2 - Satisfaction rating per course for Discovery Arts

### Feeling supported and valued through the course



Skilled facilitators put young people at ease, with 89% agreeing (strongly or somewhat) that they felt supported and valued within their course, see Figure 5.

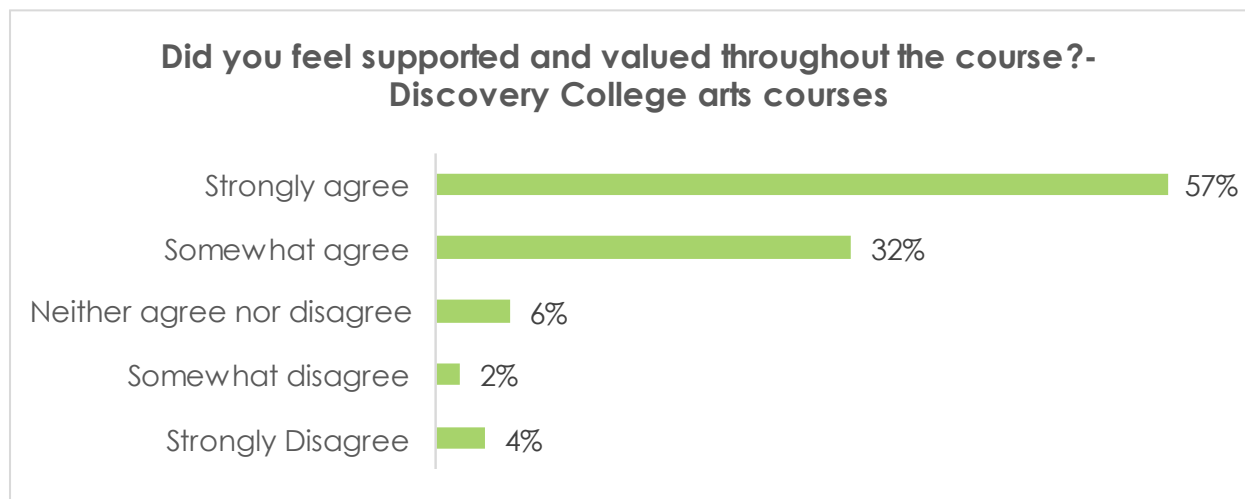


Figure 5 - Young people on Discovery Arts feeling supported and valued (53 responses)

### What young people thought was good about Discovery College arts courses

Qualitative responses revealed what participants most liked about Discovery College arts courses, indicating the excellent facilitation skills of practitioners and peers, including:

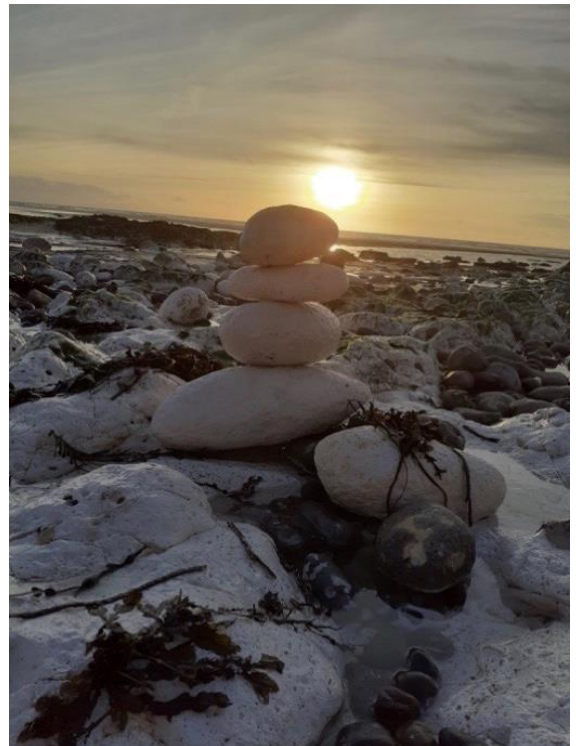
- **The opportunity to be creative and learn a new creative skill** (the most common response).
- **Connecting with others**, *“talking to new people”* having an opportunity to *“meet up in person”* (especially after lockdown) and *“feeling part of a community”*.
- **Inclusive sessions**, where facilitators *“were supportive”* and participants *“felt relaxed”*, with everyone getting *“a chance to speak if they want to”*.
- **Fun and flexibility** - participants liked the fact that their course was *“fun”*, an opportunity *“to try something new”* and have *“freedom of choice”* on what they were doing.

One interviewee described how the creative elements and supportive facilitation helped them to feel at ease, be inspired to try new things, and provide structure to their week:

*“It was a very comfortable environment. I enjoyed it and got a lot out of it ... it can inspire you to be more introspective and then do those creative things you wouldn't do on your own ... It gives you a motivator to maybe go outside your comfort zone a little bit. I enjoyed my experience, lovely instructors, good structuring.”*

CREATIVE WRITING PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWEE

Parents also had positive feedback on Discovery College arts courses, describing a positive and welcoming experience and a safe environment that has helped young people to be free to express themselves.



### How young people thought Discovery College arts courses could improve


We asked participants how their course could be better. Although most respondents in open responses indicated that nothing should change, 14 young people made the following suggestions:

- **A change to the timing of the session:** either making the course longer (most common suggestion, although only four people), longer sessions, more frequent sessions, starting an hour later in the day, and a 10-minute break (one respondent for each).
- **A wider range of or more time to do activities** (three respondents).
- **The opportunity to participate again** (two respondents).
- One respondent thought that the facilitators could be improved.
- One respondent suggested having the course closer to their home.

3.4 The difference made by Discovery Arts

- The intended outcomes of Discovery College arts courses are:**
1. Young people experience increased subjective mental and emotional wellbeing.
  2. Young people are less socially isolated and feel more connected with their peers.
  3. Young people have increased creative skills.
  4. Young people have increased skills at expressing and managing their mental health and feelings.
  5. Young people feel more resilient.
  6. Improved learning/practice of artists, arts organisations and mental health workers involved in the programme.
  7. Young people have achieved what they wanted from the course.

**3.4.1 Outcome 1: Young people experience increased subjective mental and emotional wellbeing**

<b>49%</b>	of young people had a meaningful increase in their wellbeing after participating in Discovery College arts courses.
	Discovery College arts courses had a statistically significant increase in the average mental wellbeing scores of young people participating.
<b>12</b>	courses (out of 13) resulted in an increase in wellbeing.
<b>19%</b>	reduction in the number of people with low mental wellbeing.

Wellbeing data

We measured young people's subjective wellbeing using the 35-point Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and the four measures of personal wellbeing developed by ONS. The SWEMWBS results are summarised below in Table 3.

SWEMWBS summary of results for Discovery Arts	Before the course	After the course	Change	Positive change?	Statistically significant change?	P value
<b>Total no. of responses</b>	47	47	47			
<b>% Low wellbeing</b>	72.3%	53.2%	-19.1%			
<b>% Moderate wellbeing</b>	25.5%	44.7%	19.1%			
<b>% High wellbeing</b>	2.1%	2.1%	0.0%			
<b>Mean score</b>	20.60	22.00	1.40	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	P 0.001 < P 0.005
<b>Standard deviation</b>	5.25	5.57	3.27			
<b>No. of YP with a meaningful positive change</b>			23			
<b>% with a meaningful positive change (&gt;2 pts)</b>			49%			

Table 3 - Summary SWEMWBS results for Discovery College arts courses

The results using the ONS4 wellbeing domains are similar – an average of 16.79 (out of 30) before the course and 18.13 after, an average increase of 1.34 points, which is statistically significant using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (at a 95% confidence level).

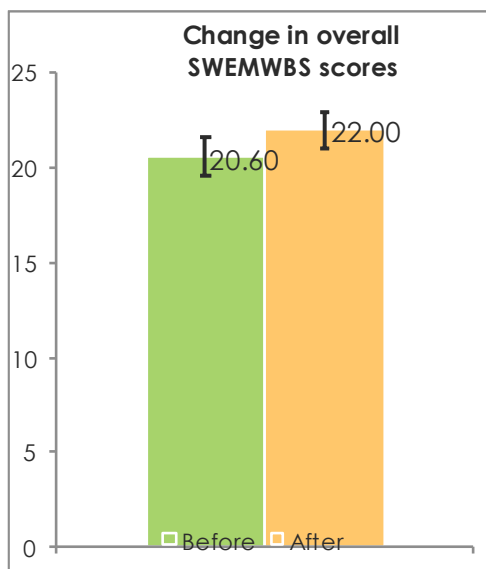


Figure 6 - Change in SWEMWBS Discovery College arts courses

Of the 47 Discovery College arts participants who completed both pre- and post-course (distance travelled) surveys, 23 (49%) reported a meaningful positive change in their wellbeing (of two points or more). The mean average increase was 1.40 points (from 20.6 to 22, see Figure 6), a statistically significant increase (using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test) at a 95% confidence level.

Before Discovery College arts courses, 72.3% of participants had low wellbeing, which reduced to 53.2% of participants by the end of the eight-week course (see Figure 7), a reduction of 19.1%.

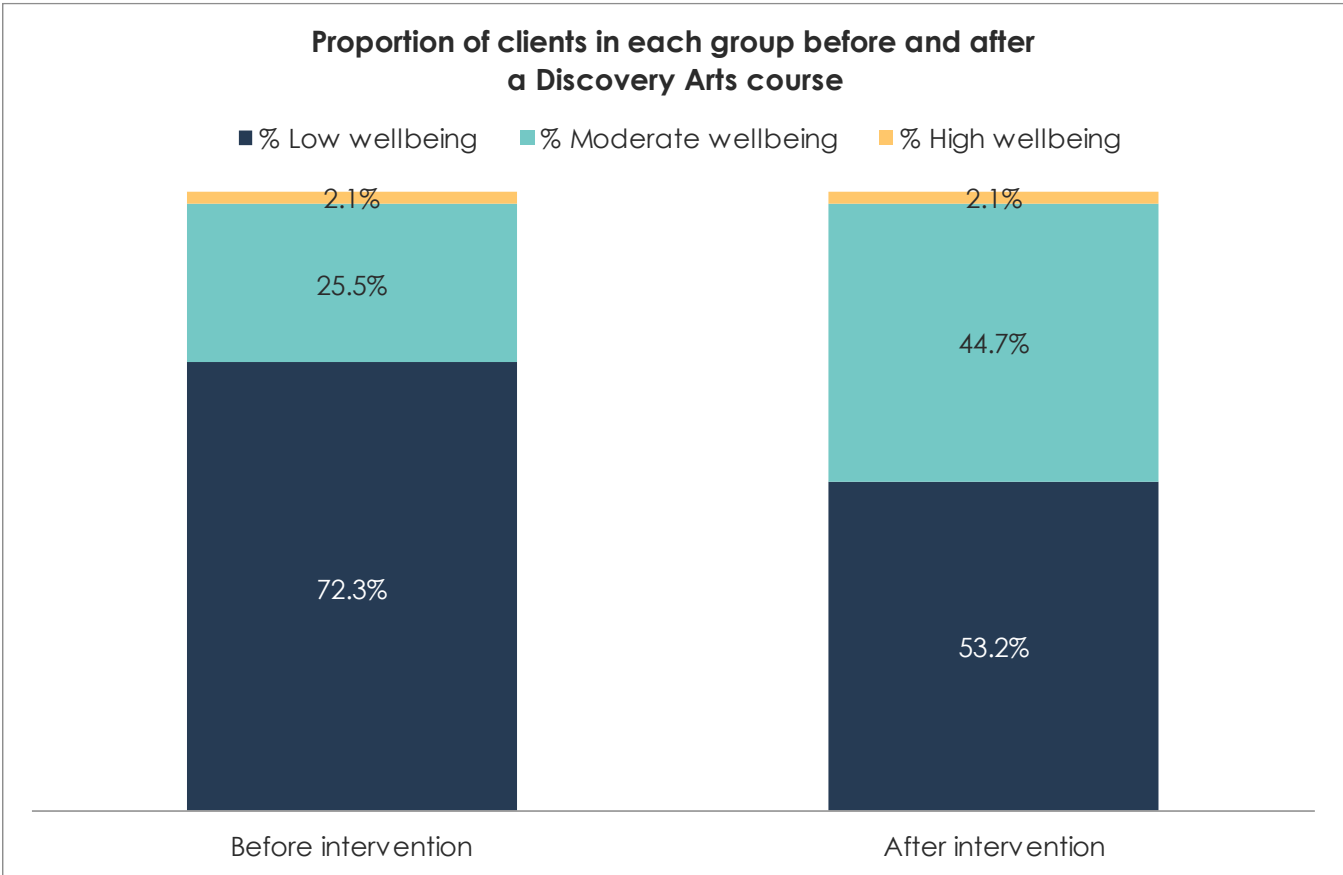


Figure 7 - Wellbeing categories before and after Discovery College arts courses

*“I think the [increased] confidence helped her social anxiety. She had a really good summer; doing this course really fed into that.”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE OF A PARTICIPANT ON DIGITAL STORYMAKER COURSE

Course breakdown of wellbeing

The breakdown by course in Table 4 shows that all except one course (where pre-and post-course surveys were received) had a positive change in young people's wellbeing. Music Speaks in Spring 2022 was the only course that did not show an increase in wellbeing, although the course had only one complete response, so this is not a reliable indicator of the course as a whole.

SWEMWBS summary of results by course	Mode of delivery	Total no. of responses	Before course	After course	Change	Positive change?
2020 - Autumn Designing Together	Online	1	11.00	18.00	7.00	yes
2020 - Autumn PhotoClub	Online	5	19.20	19.40	0.20	yes
2021 - Summer Music Speaks	Online	6	20.00	20.67	0.67	yes
2021 - Autumn Creative Writing	In-person	3	19.33	20.00	0.67	yes
2021 - Autumn Music Speaks	Blended	2	23.00	23.50	0.50	yes
2021 - Autumn PhotoClub	Blended	2	26.50	29.50	3.00	yes
2021 – Autumn Street Art	In-person	3	21.33	24.00	2.67	yes
2022 - Spring Street Art	In-person	6	18.83	19.33	0.50	yes
2022 - Spring Tech Tasters	In-person	5	24.00	25.20	1.20	yes
2022 - Spring Music Speaks	In-person	1	19.00	18.00	-1.00	no
2022 - Summer Nature Space	In-person	4	24.00	27.00	3.00	yes
2022 – Summer Digital Story Makers	In-person	5	18.80	21.80	3.00	yes
2022 - Autumn Discovering Our Best Selves	In-person	4	19.50	20.00	0.50	yes

Table 4 - Change in young people's wellbeing (Discovery College arts courses)

#### Wellbeing results by online v in-person delivery

Table 5 shows that the wellbeing increase for people participating in online courses was lower (at one-point) than for those participating in in-person courses (at 1.52 points). However, the wellbeing difference between online and in-person delivery is not statistically significant (using a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances, where  $p=0.658$ ).

SWEMWBS Summary results per mode of delivery	Total no. of responses	Before course	After course	Change	Positive change?
Online	12	18.92	19.92	1.00	yes
Blended	4	24.75	26.50	1.75	yes
In person	31	20.71	22.23	1.52	yes

Table 5 - Changes in young people's wellbeing per mode of delivery (Discovery College arts courses)

#### Changes in wellbeing for repeat participants

Some participants and facilitators thought that the **length of their course was too short**, particularly as it took some young people time to warm up to the group and engage.



*“The whole program was quite short, with everyone coming and going in, we were just starting to establish a bit of a rhythm and then it was over.”*

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER

Parents interviewed thought that eight weeks wasn't long enough – one said that their daughter would prefer it if the course was longer (preferably running all the time), because it took her daughter so long to get comfortable with the people there, then when she finally felt at ease and able to *“express her true emotions”*, the course ended, so there wasn't any time to embed the change.

We were able to identify 25 participants who have attended more than one course. Of these, eight participants have complete wellbeing data from their first and last course attended. Participants who attended more than one course had a bigger average increase in wellbeing at 2.125-points, compared to participants overall (1.4-point increase on average). Although the sample size is not significant, anecdotal evidence supports this – the young people we encountered (through the evaluation Steering Group and 'A Voice That's Mine' event) who were observed as having the biggest transformations in their mental health and wellbeing had participated in multiple courses and then went on to become Peer Mentors and members of the Discovery College participation group called 'Download'.

### From Music Speaks participant to Peer Mentor

Hannah\* participated in Music Speaks before lockdown and was delighted that the group worked towards producing one of her songs. Describing it as *“one of my favourite things of all time that I've ever taken part in”*, Hannah said she was initially signposted to the course to help with her mental health challenges. She found the weekly course something to look forward to because *“it brings out the positivity in yourself and you can become who you're supposed to be.”* Hannah was excited to participate in another Music Speaks course and more recently a Photoclub course, where she was amazed to find how well she could express herself through photography. Hannah was delighted to be invited by Discovery College to become a Peer Mentor and *“jumped at the chance because it seemed so exciting”*. Having now been trained as a Peer Mentor, Hannah has co-facilitated two courses where she works as a team with her co-facilitators to make sure everyone feels welcome and is equally included.

\*Name changed to protect the identity of the person.

### 3.4.2 Outcome 2: Young people are less socially isolated and feel more connected with their peers

#### Working as part of a group

**82%** of young people were observed as working as part of a group

Often one of the first challenges for young people participating in Discovery College arts courses is being able to tolerate being part of a group, particularly when their experience of group work in school had felt so challenging. Facilitators gently introduced young people to group work, with many young people observed as initially turning their cameras off when participating online or placing themselves outside of a group in face-to-face sessions. However, as they started to feel more at ease in the presence of facilitators and their peers, young people started to feel more comfortable and began to enjoy groupwork. 82% of participants in Discovery College arts courses were observed as working as part of the group.

*“The group were energised by their ideas. They were extremely accepting of each other’s needs and way of being in the space and accommodated each other.”*

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER OBSERVATION NOTES

In most courses, young people collaborated on group artwork, giving them a safe space to discuss their creative efforts and connect with others.

*“It helped me to communicate with people to work together on designs better.”*

DISCOVERY ARTS PARTICIPANT

Young people said that Discovery College approach to groupwork helped them *“be more patient”, “get on with people better”, “be more confident around other people”, “not get so angry”*, meet new people, and make new friends.

#### Feeling connected to others

**63%** of young people felt more connected to others

Connecting with others is one of the five ways to wellbeing identified by the New Economics Foundation (2008).

## DISCOVERY COLLEGE ARTS COURSES

63% of young people (26 out of 41) reported that they felt more connected to others after their Discovery College arts course.

Their mean average scores (out of 5), increased from 2.89 to 3.77 (see Figure 8), an average of 0.88 points.

Once participants started to feel more comfortable in a group, they connected with peers with similar interests, which in turn helped them to feel more confident and understood.

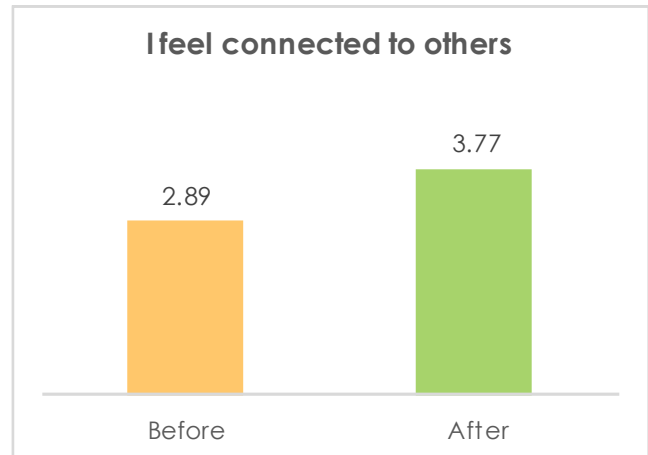


Figure 8 - Feeling more connected to others (out of 5). 41 responses

*“I have met people with the same struggles who want to listen to my interests or have similar ones.”*

TECH TASTERS SURVEY RESPONDENT

Participants often described the increased connection to other people as resulting from having common creative interests, which often provided the spark for a deeper connection on the mental health challenges they may be experiencing:

*“It helped me realise that other people were feeling the same as me and loved listening and playing music as much as I do.”*

MUSIC SPEAKS SURVEY RESPONDENT

Participants within several courses formed a WhatsApp group so that they could keep in touch once the course ended.

### Get on and work with other people

**85%** of young people felt that the course helped them to get on and work with other people

We asked survey respondents if the course had helped them to get on with and work with others, and if so, how. Qualitative analysis of survey responses indicated that 85% of participants (44 out of 52) felt that Discovery Arts helped them to get on and work with other people, whilst the remainder were neutral or expressed their disagreement.

*“I got to be with other people, doing the same thing. That felt good.”*

TECH TASTERS SURVEY RESPONDENT

*“I was really hesitant to join and struggled to stay optimistic, but I ended up really enjoying socialising with everyone.”*

MUSIC SPEAKS SURVEY RESPONDENT

All courses were delivered online during the national and local lockdowns due to Covid-19, with some courses offering a hybrid model of online and in-person delivery. Although some people said that they found online courses difficult to engage with, for others it was a rare opportunity during lockdown to connect with others and be less socially isolated.

*“During Covid there is little communication with others. The course helped with keeping in touch with speaking to other people even if it was online.”*

MUSIC SPEAKS SURVEY RESPONDENT

### 3.4.3 Outcome 3: Young people have increased creative skills

Developed or learnt new creative skills

**86%** of young people were observed as learning a new creative skill

Having the opportunity to work with professional artists inspired young people to harness their own creativity and bring out the talents of their peers. 86% of participants (107 out of 125) were observed as learning a new creative skill.

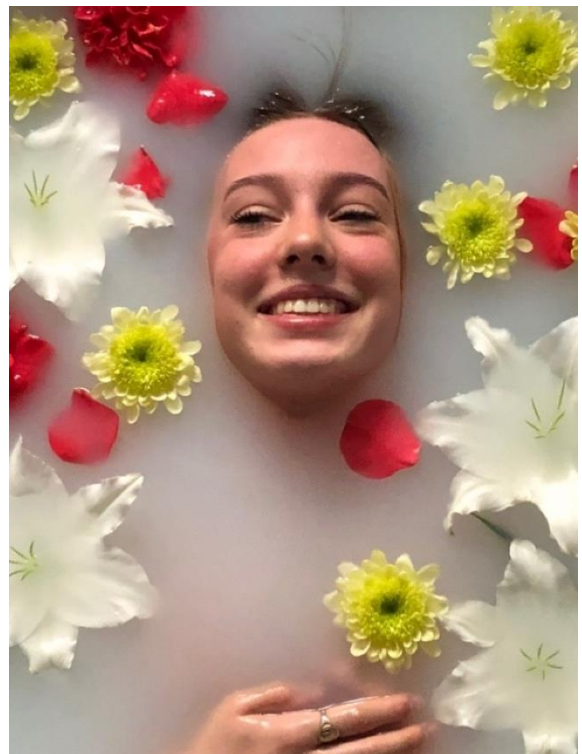
*“It made me use other people's work and make that better and get their ideas.”*

PHOTO CLUB SURVEY RESPONDENT

Several young people said that they liked the fact that they felt comfortable showing their individual artwork because there was no academic judgement on it, unlike at school:

*“Olivia (not her real name) decided not to do a sketch, but to start right on with her tableau. Said she had learned that she can show her artwork without feeling judged. Olivia said this course is helping her with her creativity.”*

AUTOMATA FACILITATOR'S OBSERVATION



The type of creative skills learnt or developed

Through Discovery College arts courses, young people have increased their skills in photography, music, storytelling and creative writing, tech, street art, journaling, and web design, to name a few.

27 young people participating in Discovery College arts courses returned evaluation journals with a record of the specific skills they had learnt through courses. Whilst most identified technical creative skills (such as spray painting, guitar skills, stencilling and drawing), several young people had made an unprompted connection between creativity and wellbeing or personal skills they had learnt, including:

*“Patience and improvisation.”*

*“Basics of spray paint, stencils and being more open.”*

*“Creative building, teamwork, cutting, planting, watering.”*

*“I feel more confident with Zoom and I find myself using light more in my photos. Also, when I'm out, I notice more things to photograph.”*

*“How to better include myself in the activities. Improving my ability to talk to new people. Becoming more confident. Sharing more of my ideas. Speaking more.”*

Working as part of a team to contribute to the creation of group artwork

**82%**

of young people were observed as working as part of a team to contribute to the creation of group artwork



Creating a piece of group artwork was practically easier in-person in year two than in year one when delivering courses online and qualitative analysis has indicated that this was an important part of young people feeling connected to others, with 82% (118 out of 144) observed as working part of a team to contribute to the creation of group artwork.

*“The participants seemed generous, wanting to support each other, learning to give feedback and compliments.”*

FACILITATOR'S OBSERVATIONS

Using creativity to feel good

34%

of young people reported an increase in using creativity to feel good

Young people participating in Discovery College arts courses already **described themselves as being able to use creativity to feel good before the course**, reporting a high average baseline of 4.41 (out of 5) and 4.36 after the course (0.05 reduction). Nonetheless, 34% of participants (14 out of 41) reported an increase in using creativity to feel good after participating.

*“Now I feel more confident playing the piano around others.”*

MUSIC SPEAKS PARTICIPANT

**How music helped one participant to find joy and be less isolated**

Alice\*, who has learning and physical disabilities participated in the Music Speaks course and was described by a facilitator as being quiet initially but began to enjoy the course as she practised with several instruments including the drums, wireless microphone and singing, experimenting with writing her own lyrics.

It was quite a journey, the creative practitioner noted, with Alice showing improved confidence in her creativity and being around other people. Alice explained that before she went to Discovery College, she was “upset and crying all the time“ as she was very isolated. She said that Discovery College helped her to feel better because she sat with lots of other young people and enjoyed laughing and smiling with them.

\*Name changed to protect identity of the person.

Creative skills and how they are seen as supporting wellbeing

Young people reported being creative to help them to feel more at ease, *“happy and calm”*. For some, the creative skills they developed help them to unwind from the stresses of a difficult day at school or college.

*“[She gained] her sense of self...because I guess her time at school sometimes is managing the day, and some of that is difficult for her, but then she can have a space [in Discovery College] where not only is it not difficult, but she can engage in something creative and have that positive experience.”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE



**3.4.4 Outcome 4: Young people have increased skills at expressing feelings and managing their mental health**

Expressing feelings and managing their mental health

<b>87%</b>	of young people were observed as sharing their thoughts about a subject
<b>81%</b>	of young people were observed expressing their feelings in a positive way

Qualitative responses indicate that creative activities enabled young people and facilitators to work side-by-side in a relaxed way and, when they felt comfortable, participants began to open-up about what may be going on in their lives. 81% of young people were observed expressing feelings in a positive way (110 out of 136).

One of the recommendations from the Year One evaluation report (*A Safe Space for Creative Expression and Connection*, Insley Consulting, 2021) was to pilot providing more time and space to let young people share something about who they are and how they feel, to see if this resulted in a bigger increase in mental wellbeing. Some facilitators said that they planned in more time for participants to reveal something about themselves, and this was the focus of the Discovering Our Best Selves course.



**Through multiple Discovery College arts courses, one participant found an outlet for their emotions, which has led to increased confidence, resilience, and reduced isolation.**

One parent interviewed explained that before participating in Discovery College arts course her daughter, Chloe\*, was *“depressed and secluded, not wanting to participate in anything, just wanting to be in her room”*. Chloe participated in three Discovery College arts courses, with Street Art being the first, where she learnt to express herself through art after facilitators helped her to feel safe and at ease. She then went on to participate in Nature Space where she enjoyed putting hard work into gardening and seeing her efforts come to fruition, as well as trying new things such as making delicious nettle kebabs. Most recently, Chloe attended the Discovering Our Best Selves course, which her mother said she



loved the most as it really helped Chloe to *“find herself, feel her emotions”* and realise that *“it’s ok to express them ... she felt free for the first time. It’s probably the first space outside of the house that she’s felt like she can be her”*.

Chloe's mother thought the courses have made a lasting difference to her daughter, with Chloe continuing to practice drawing at home and feeling proud of her achievements. Chloe's increased confidence has led to her making a friend through a Discovery College arts course and recently arranging to go into town with her, which Chloe would never have done before due to her anxieties. Her mother noted that she had built resilience through the Discovering Our Best Selves course, whilst also gaining a better understanding of how to relate to other people, which would never have happened otherwise.

Chloe's mother thought that going to the courses was *“like a big weight off her shoulders”*, knowing that she can go somewhere, say how she feels and be heard. Mother and daughter both wish that courses ran for longer and ideally, throughout the year. However, they thought that having a variety was important too.

\*Name changed to protect identity of the person.

### New skills in managing their mental health

Qualitative analysis from evaluation journal entries indicates that young people have identified excellent strategies through courses for managing their mental health, including:

- **Positive social interactions and seeking support from others:** Talking to people, being more open, being patient, listening to people, being kind to others, and speaking to family members about problems.
- **Coping strategies:** Staying calm, taking time for themselves, listening to calming music, giving themselves a break when needed, thinking positively, and playing games to let go of anger and other emotions.
- **Self-care:** Sleeping, drinking more water, having a break from gadgets, not looking at things that upset them, and using self-affirmations.
- **Doing enjoyable activities:** Observing things, drawing, playing music, creative writing, reading, and going to the gym with friends.
- **Being in a group:** Working in groups, having group chats, sharing skills and socialising.

### **3.4.5 Outcome 5: Young people feel more resilient**

Resilience is the ability to bounce back or recover from challenging situations. The Evaluation Steering Group discussed what we might see within young people when they build resilience. It was suggested that we might expect to see young people becoming more confident, believing in themselves, being open to trying new things and having a sense of purpose. Below we examine the evidence of whether these things have been achieved.

*“Whenever she would do the art course, she would come back and really be into drawing; she's an amazing artist. That [course] inspired her. ... I think she's built up a lot of resilience... and more understanding of other people and how she should react to other people.”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE

In future evaluations, it is recommended to use the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et. al., 2008) to measure resilience, see section 3.4.10.

### Confidence

**61%** of young people reported an increase in feeling confident

Facilitators frequently observed young people as lacking in confidence within early sessions. They initially noted young people feeling uncomfortable talking in front of others and in their own creativity, with cameras mostly off in early online sessions.

However, as participants started to feel more at ease, there was a notable increase in confidence, with 61% reporting an increase in feeling confident after the course. Confidence had the biggest increase of all self-reported outcomes within the Outcomes Wheel in journals – from an average of 2.63 (out of 5) before the course to 3.84 after (see Figure 9), an increase of 1.21 points.

Again, creativity and supportive facilitation were key factors in the self-reported increase in confidence, helping young people to feel proud of themselves and their achievements:

*“The people who ran it were good and helped me to feel more confident in my sketches.”*

WEB DESIGN PARTICIPANT SURVEY  
RESPONDENT

Creative activities allowed many young people to build trust in themselves and others, *“think outside the box”*, and build their confidence in sharing their work and opening-up to the group.



Figure 9 - Increase in confidence (39 responses)

*“I'm really warming to the group and beginning to enjoy it a lot more. Even though I can come across as confident, to begin with, I was extremely anxious and didn't think I would be able to take part in something like this. But I feel really comfortable talking and sharing things now already. Everyone's so lovely and I'm grateful to be able to be part of the group:)”*

MESSAGE SENT TO MUSIC SPEAKS FACILITATOR

Open to new ideas and trying new things

**86%** of young people were observed as trying something new through a Discovery College arts course

Once young people felt more confident in sessions and learnt or developed a new creative skill, they frequently practised it at home, developing new hobbies and interests.

*“It's made me do more activities at home. Like in the Discovering Our Best Selves, we did origami. I've been doing that a lot because that's something I've never thought I'd be able to do. It's made me think of new ideas and hobbies that I could have.”*

DIGITAL STORYMAKER/DISCOVERING OUR BEST SELVES PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWED

Feeling comfortable being their true self

**51%** of young people reported an increase in feeling comfortable being their true self

Through Discovery Arts courses and being in the company of peers who were experiencing similar feelings, young people felt more relaxed and able to let down their guard.

*“It helped me to be more myself, talk to people, and make friends.”*

WEB DESIGN PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWEE

Responses within the Outcomes Wheel indicate that 51% reported an increase in feeling comfortable being their true selves (21 out of 41), from an average of 3.49 points (out of 5) to 3.92, an increase of 0.44 points.

*“She felt free. I think that's probably the first time she's ever felt like, she could just be her.”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE

**3.4.6 Outcome 6: Improved learning/practice of artists, arts organisations and mental health workers involved in the programme**

18

facilitators received training in co-production

Skills and knowledge gained by artists, arts organisations and mental health workers

In the year one evaluation report we recommended improvements to the co-facilitation process (including providing facilitators with greater clarity on the purpose of the course and each session, and more advanced preparation of courses). Since then, two half-day co-production training courses have been provided to 18 facilitators (although this can't be attributed to the evaluation as it was always an aim of Discovery College).

Within this training, which was co-produced with Peer Trainers, facilitators discussed and learned about the principles of co-production, why it is important and how to overcome any barriers to co-production. Both creative and mental health practitioners valued the stronger direction provided by Discovery College on the college's approach to co-production through the training, which helped them to feel more confident in their practice.

*“[Co-production training] really helped me put my voice forward and understand how we can develop co-production a lot more.”*

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER TALKING ABOUT CO-PRODUCTION TRAINING

**Stronger approach to co-production for Digital Story Makers course:**

One mental health practitioner described the approach used for co-production for the Digital Storymakers course, where the three facilitators met in the same room for three hours some time before the course started, getting to know each other as a team and what each needed to feel safe.

This set the tone for future planning meetings and enabled facilitators to reflect on sessions as the course progressed; to review what was working and what needed to improve in a safe way, whilst giving the team time to reflect on their own practice.

Creative facilitators said that they valued the support from Discovery College and Culture Shift teams with budgeting, managing sign-ups, talking to parents and evaluation so they could focus on what they do best. Several thought that partnering with Discovery College and Culture Shift helped extend their reach in the area.

**3.4.7 Outcome 7: Young people have achieved what they wanted from the course**

**72%** of participants in Discovery College arts courses reported that they had achieved the goal they set for themselves

Within journals young people were asked to identify a goal that they would like to achieve through the course, and then at the end of the programme to reflect on whether it had been achieved.

We received 36 complete journals from Discovery College arts course participants, with 72% of young people noting that they had achieved the goal they set for themselves, see Figure 10.

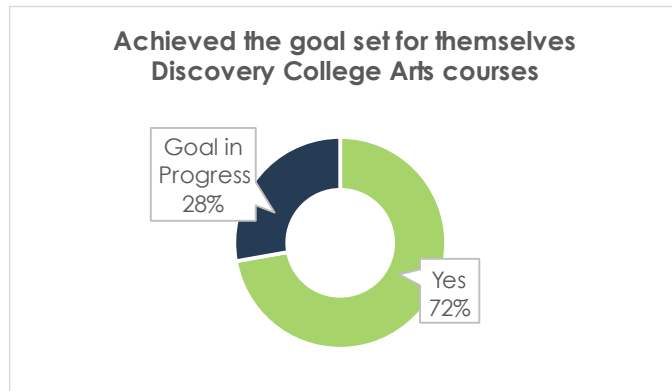


Figure 10 - % young people who achieved the goals they set for themselves (37 responses)

The goals that young people wanted to set themselves broadly fell into three categories:

- 1. Develop creative skills:** Including learning an instrument, being more confident performing to others, painting, drawing, spray painting, IT and gardening. One young person said that they wanted to *“take good photos to prepare for GCSE”*, another said that they wanted to *“learn photography skills for their creative business”*.
- 2. Find their voice:** *“Being more comfortable talking to strangers”, “to be understood”, “to have more confidence in speaking up”, “to discover my best self”*.
- 3. Connect with others:** *“See other people and work as a team”, “make more friends like me in a safe space”, “not be socially awkward”, “to be myself other than in my room”*.

Through the course, young people outlined how they achieved these things:

*“I learnt to become less of a perfectionist”, “feel more confident about sharing my music”, “developed more patience (although still working on it)”, “written a song”, “done a series of cool paintings for my family”, “gained a bigger friendship group.”*

COMPOSITE QUOTES ABOUT PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS GOALS FROM JOURNALS

For some young people, although they had noticed a difference in themselves, they realised that they still had further to go:

*“I’ve quite enjoyed it. I still feel quite nervous, but I feel like I’m improving a bit socially. I enjoy doing new and different activities.”*

*“I haven’t achieved my goal, but I made progress in talking to others when I usually don’t talk, so I’m really proud of myself.”*

### **3.4.8 Unintended outcomes or consequences**

#### Unintended positive consequences

Raising aspirations and facilitating future learning and work opportunities is not an intended outcome of the service, but there is some anecdotal evidence that this may have happened for some young people.

*“It was a real motivator for her to look at what she wanted to do. I mean, she’s looked at London College of Fashion because she might be able to do fashion journalism, and she’s finding out about those things.”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE ABOUT HOW THEIR CHILD IS USING THE SKILLS LEARNED FROM THE COURSE

Other participants said that they were participating in creative courses to help with GCSEs or to support potential future creative businesses.

#### Unintended negative consequences

On several occasions, young people, parents and facilitators expressed disappointment that Discovery College arts courses were not available for longer or all year round, because although considerable change had been achieved, there was still a long road to recovery for many young people. One parent shared that their child *“panicked”* about courses ending as their daughter had not yet got to a place where they felt able to consistently utilise their new skills in everyday life.

*“When the course is finished, she has this panic of ‘how am I going to sort this out now? ... She was always asking how many weeks [of the course] are left and is worrying that it’s going to go away.’”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE

The parent thought that if courses were available all year round, their daughter would feel more relaxed and learn to be more present with their emotions.

### 3.4.9 *Conclusions, how change was achieved and Discovery College arts' contribution towards change*

This evaluation has found that young people participating in Discovery College arts courses reported a statistically significant increase in their mental wellbeing, as well as self-reported increases in feeling connected to others, confidence and feeling comfortable being their true selves. The creative skills that young people learnt were central to them feeling relaxed in the course and in groups and have helped them to develop excellent strategies to manage their mental health, with many reporting using these skills at home after the course. More than three quarters of young people achieved the goals that they set themselves, which included wanting to be more creative, connect with others and find their voice.

Whilst some parents felt sure that the self-reported improvements to their child's wellbeing and other skills were entirely a result of Discovery College arts courses as they were not receiving any other help, it is thought that a significant proportion of participants were receiving mental wellbeing support through CAMHS or other agencies, so we cannot *attribute* the observed change in all participants directly to Discovery College arts courses. **However, there is good qualitative evidence to show that courses made an important contribution to the recorded outcomes.**

*"Now I can talk to people; talking to people is a big one... All kinds of stuff comes to me like, 'I wouldn't have been able to do that four years ago'."*

WEB DESIGN PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWEE ABOUT USING THE SKILLS LEARNT FROM THE COURSE

#### How creativity contributed towards change

External evidence shows that engagement in creative activities such as music, dancing, visual arts and writing can decrease anxiety, stress and mood disturbances in children and adults alike (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). For young people specifically, participating in creative activities has been shown to have a positive effect on their wellbeing, behaviour, self-confidence and self-esteem (Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013).

These effects were seen within Discovery College arts courses too. **Qualitative evidence from young people, mental health and creative practitioners alike consistently indicated that creative courses made an important contribution to the self-reported and observed outcomes achieved by young people**, including:

1. **Engaging with their peers in a safe way**, through conversation starters and finding common creative interests to foster social connections and reduce loneliness and isolation.

*"I think it just really enabled that opening up a conversation for people who do find that incredibly difficult in our group."*

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER



2. **Expressing feelings in an indirect and safe way.** Many young people said that they were able to be free to be themselves through creative expression in a way that they hadn't been able to before.

*“I do think creativity is so important with this age group, as a means of being able to safely engage with peers. I think that coming together around a creative task allows feelings to come out in an indirect or safer way.”*

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

3. **Enjoying being in a group for the first time** in a long time by working collaboratively on a group piece of art, giving and receiving encouragement from their peers on individual and group projects, and feeling free from judgement.
4. **Reducing stress and anxiety** by helping people to *“feel calm”* and *“happy”* when practising their creative skills at home.
5. **Feeling more confident and develop a sense of purpose and meaning** by building or developing a new creative skill.
6. **Drawing on people’s existing strengths and creative talents and learn in a safe, relaxed and non-academic way.**

*“I think having the Discovery College courses as a safe space has been important and they are creative forces... It feels like it's all about doing the opposite of school and trying to create a different environment that doesn't remind people that they're in a classroom but instead just leans into their talents and skills that were already there. From that, I've seen changes where people have felt respected for their skills and have been able to explore what they most enjoy. For some of the young people, it's been the only place that they've been able to do that, so that's been vital.”*

PEER MENTOR

**Recommendation 5:** Creativity has played an important contribution to the self-reported and observed change among Discovery College arts participants and should continue to be a feature of the Discovery College offer.

### How co-production has contributed towards change

**Qualitative evidence assessed through the evaluation shows that co-production and co-facilitation helped to contribute to the change** in the following ways:

1. **Creating a supportive, relaxed and inclusive environment with *“freedom from judgement”*, where 89% of young people felt supported and valued** (see section 3.2.2).

*“All 3 leaders were always so supportive and were all very relaxed.”*

DISCO PHOTOCLUB PARTICIPANT

2. **Having relatable peers** who are compassionate role models of recovery from mental health challenges.

*“They’re very compassionate; everybody is very understanding, and I think it’s obviously about the life insight that [Peer Mentors] have had, the reason that they’ve gotten involved with the college is part of what makes them great instructors, you know; they can bring that experience and understanding and utilise it in the courses.”*

DISCOVERY COLLEGE ARTS PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWEE

3. **More time for individual and tailored support that is sensitive to their needs** and *“puts young people at ease”*. In one course, this meant buying various fidget toys because most participants had an ADHD diagnosis. The creative practitioner said how incredibly valuable they were when young people arrived and were waiting for others, and whilst introducing the session. Qualitative evidence shows that support was person-centred and tailored to young people’s needs.

4. **Having freedom and flexibility within sessions and being open to feedback so that young people can choose what they want to do:**

*“It’s quite nice having a choice of what to do and just sitting around and talking to people for a bit. I ended up really liking that. And then some other people said, ‘Oh, can we do this?’ It was like, kind of run by us, which is good.”*

DISCOVERING OUR BEST SELVES PARTICIPANT

**Recommendation 6:** Co-production makes an important contribution to creating an atmosphere that allows change to happen among young people with mental health challenges. Discovery College should continue with this model going forward.

### How different spaces have contributed towards change

Discovery College arts courses are run in community and arts venues throughout East Sussex, although in year one, most were run online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Creative practitioners within focus groups and parents interviewed generally felt that it didn’t necessarily matter if the course was delivered in a community or art venue, but it was most important that young people were participating in a learning opportunity away from the school environment.

*“The separation from school is absolutely crucial because a lot of them have really negative experiences of school. So, if they’d been in a space that was*

*even slightly reminiscent of that, I think it would have caused them to be more anxious and shut down a little bit. Our space was quite private, which I think was good.”*

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER WITHIN FOCUS GROUP

*“When you go and do things like that, it's taking them out of the classroom environment. It's not just like going to school, it's about having access to things. I think doing it at the Towner [gallery], it was lovely, it's a really nice space. And they're lovely there.”*

PARENT INTERVIEWEE

However, for some young people, particularly those living in more rural areas or with a disability, travelling across the county meant that courses were inaccessible to them, whilst some young people found online courses difficult to connect with others.

Furthermore, one of the challenges of delivery in community/arts venues in the evening is that the average attendance rate for Discovery College arts courses (at 58%) was lower than Telling Your Story courses (at 68%, see chapter 4), which are run in school. Therefore, the contributing factor may be the fact that sessions are run in a way that is not traditionally academic rather than them being in an arts or community venue specifically.

### **3.4.10 Recommended future development of the programme**

Going forward, consideration should be made to making the following developments to the Discovery College courses (including the arts programme):

#### Pilot increasing the length of courses

Within surveys, interviews and focus groups, some parents, young people and practitioners suggested that courses should run for longer than eight weeks, with many evaluation respondents indicating that courses were ending just as they started to see a change within young people. This is supported by quantitative data, albeit from a small number of repeat participants; those who participated in more than one course had a larger increase in wellbeing, see section 3.4.1.

Although longer courses (of say 10-12 weeks) may result in fewer young people being supported and may have a cost implication, longer courses may have a greater impact on the wellbeing of young people participating and other outcomes achieved, plus more could be done to fill places so that they are running at an optimal level (see 3.2.3). Some parents suggested that courses run on weekends and/or during school holidays when young people

might have a clear head and feel free to be themselves. It's certainly worth piloting, although there are practical implications regarding staffing that need to be considered.

**Recommendation 7:** Pilot running Discovery College courses for 12 weeks to see if this has a greater impact on participants' wellbeing and outcomes achieved and ensure that participants and parents continue to be signposted to future courses.

### Blend of online v in-person delivery

Although mode of delivery (i.e., in-person or online) did not indicate a statistically significant variance in the increased wellbeing of young people, some young people said that they struggled to engage in virtual sessions, whilst others struggled to attend face-to-face sessions in another part of the county. Therefore, a blend of in-person and online delivery is recommended to give young people choice on how they would like to access courses.

*“I think having a blended course is vital for some of those young people who just physically can't [get to a venue]. You know, we had people with serious surgical needs who couldn't actually come.”*

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

**Recommendation 8:** Continue with face-to-face courses, whilst also offering participants online courses as an alternative so that young people have choice.

### Recommendations for future evaluation

To make monitoring & Evaluation of future Discovery College arts courses robust, relevant and proportionate to resources, we recommend the following methods:

1. **Pre- and post-course (distance travelled) surveys to include** the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing (**SWEMWBS**) scale **and the Brief Resilience Scale** (Smith et. al., 2008). The Outcomes Wheel could be incorporated into surveys (to replace the journal) with post-course feedback questions.
2. **Open discussion session with young people at the end of the course** (recorded, with participants' permission) to reflect on how far they have come as individuals and as a group, and what they thought of the course. As recommended in year one, the last session could be designed to celebrate young people's achievements, with certificates recognising their progress and contributions, as well as an opportunity to capture qualitative feedback. This could be easier to fit in if courses are 10-12 weeks rather than the current duration of eight weeks.
3. **Facilitators' observations.** It was particularly helpful to the year one evaluation to have facilitators' observations, as we had (at that time) received little self-evaluation data from

young people and very little qualitative data. It is recommended that facilitators continue to record the qualitative insights after every session to support their reflective practice, but that quantitative count of observations could be strengthened and simplified by utilising a scale to be completed at the end of the course, as suggested below.

Outcome indicator	Observation throughout the course					Comments
	Good improvement	Some improvement	Little to no improvement	Dis-engagement	Not observed	
Confidence						
Effective group working						
Creative skill learnt/developed						
Opened up to express feelings						
Able to recover after a setback						

4. **Ensure that evaluated data is utilised as a learning opportunity for the ongoing development of Discovery College arts programme.** This will necessitate an investment of additional staff time or external resource to process evaluation data and consider learning from the insights it brings. Also see recommendation 1, regarding digital systems to support evaluation.

# Telling Your Story in numbers

Telling Your Story is a free 8-10-week creative after school course delivered by Culture Shift in four schools in Hastings, St. Leonards, Bexhill and Lewes. Courses are delivered by creative practitioners who help young people to manage the stress and challenges they face in their everyday lives.

76 Young people supported

7 Courses evaluated

4 Secondary schools

"The course was amazing because I don't get to do this stuff at home."

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT



95% of young people felt supported and valued through their course



Had a meaningful increase in wellbeing (using Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)



2.5 Statistically significant 2.5-point increase in wellbeing



Felt the course helped them to get on and work with others



Felt more connected to other young people



Felt more confident



Achieved the goal that they set for themselves



"I feel more confident. Yay, I did it!"

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

## 4. TELLING YOUR STORY

### 4.1 About Telling Your Story

Telling Your Story is an 8–10-week after-school course delivered in four secondary schools in Hastings, St. Leonards, Bexhill and Lewes for young people in Key Stage 3 (aged 11-14). The programme aims to help young people manage the stresses and challenges they face in their everyday lives by letting off steam, being creative, and exploring new ways to express themselves to build confidence, self-esteem and resilience. It is delivered by Culture Shift, with courses delivered by two or more creative practitioners, some of whom have qualifications in therapeutic practice. Culture Shift's school's work is funded by BBC Children in Need, with additional funding provided by Hastings Opportunity Area.

### 4.2 Reach and young people's engagement

#### 4.2.1 Artists and schools involved

8	artists involved
4	participating secondary schools

#### 4.2.2 Number of participants

76	young people participated in 7 Telling Your Story courses, an average of 10.9 per course
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76 young people participated in seven Telling Your Story courses, see Figure 11 for a breakdown by course. Young people are identified by the school and invited to participate in sessions (see 2.4.2 for more details on why schools selected young people). Sessions are delivered after school, on school premises; thus some of the practical challenges of getting participants to venues experienced by Discovery College arts courses were avoided.

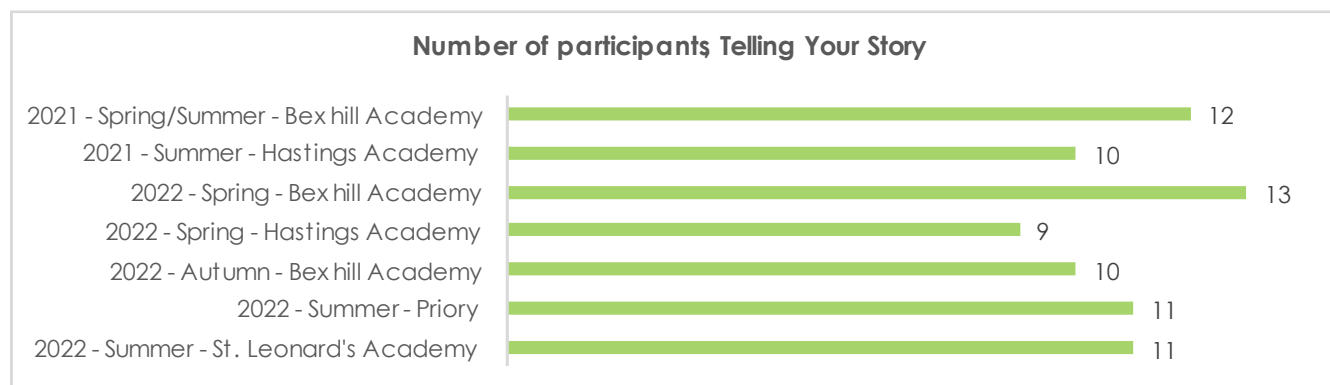


Figure 11 - Telling Your Story Participants



### 4.2.3 Attendance

**68%** average attendance rate of Telling Your Story courses

The average attendance rate of Telling Your Story courses was 68%. Attendance was considerably higher in 2022 (at 72%) than in 2021 (at 59%) when sessions were severely disrupted due to Covid-19. However, there were still some challenges with attendance at sessions in year two, including:

- Ongoing Covid-19 disruptions – several young people were off with Covid-19 or isolating, some sessions were cancelled, and schools were sometimes understaffed because of staff sickness.
- Bereavement and ongoing mental health challenges affected some young people's attendance. One school group was struggling with the death of a student in their year.
- Some young people dropped out of the course due to a lack of interest in art or creativity. In some courses, participants joined later in the programme to fill spaces, but this brought a change to group dynamics and in some cases led to conflict.

### 4.2.4 Characteristics of young people engaged

#### Mental wellbeing at the start

**79%** of Telling Your Story participants had low mental wellbeing before participating in a course

Young people were referred to Telling Your Story by schools because of struggles with anxiety, Special Educational Needs or neurodiversity, gender identity struggles, home worries or family problems including parental separation, or the need to develop confidence and friendships.

**Telling Your Story is effectively reaching students who need support with their mental health and wellbeing;** 79% of participants have low mental wellbeing before starting a Telling Your Story course. Wellbeing levels were assessed using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS), see section 4.4.1 for a breakdown.

## 4.3 How effectively was the programme delivered?

### 4.3.1 Young people's feedback

#### Net Promoter Score

**27** Telling Your Story Net Promoter Score

**8** average satisfaction rating (out of 10)

## TELLING YOUR STORY

Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a measure of customer satisfaction (see section 3.3.2 for more details on NPS and benchmarks). Telling Your Story has a favourable NPS score of 27 (similar to Discovery College arts courses, at 25). Although more than half (51%) of the 41 respondents scored Telling Your Story 9 or 10 (out of 10), 24% gave a score of 6 or less (see Figure 12). The average score was 8 out of 10. We explore what young people thought was good about Telling Your Story and how it could improve over.

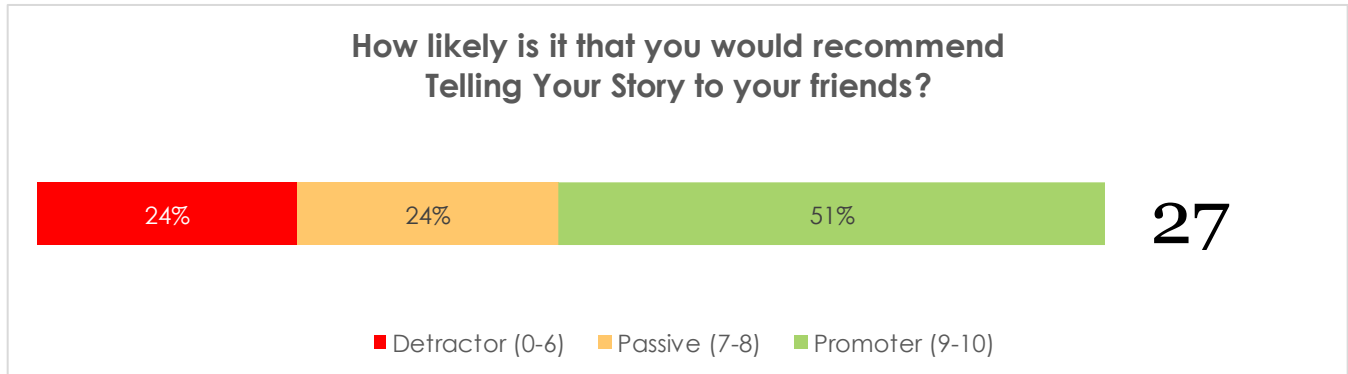


Figure 12 - Net Promoter Score Telling Your Story (41 respondents)

Year	Term	Course name	Average score out of 10	No. of responses
2021	Spring/Summer	Bexhill Academy	7	5
2021	Summer	Hastings Academy	9	4
2022	Summer	Priory	9	9
2022	Spring	Hastings Academy	8	7
2022	Summer	St. Leonard's Academy	6	5
2022	Autumn	Bexhill Academy	9	5

Table 6 - Breakdown of participant satisfaction by school (Telling Your Story)

### Feeling supported and valued



Facilitators did an excellent job of creating a welcoming, relaxed and supportive environment where 95% of young people felt supported and valued, see Figure 13.

## TELLING YOUR STORY

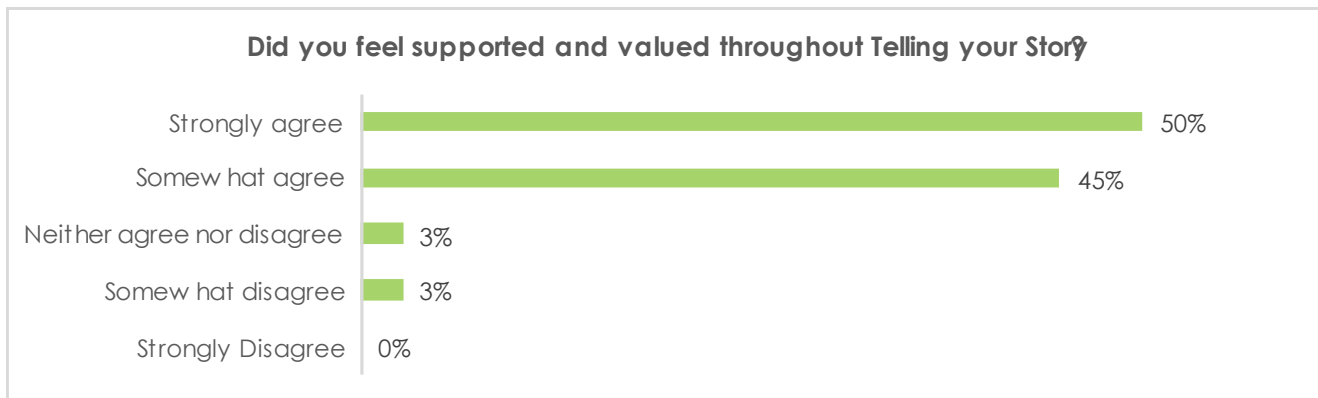


Figure 13 - Feeling supported and valued throughout the course - Telling your Story

### What young people thought was good about Telling Your Story

Qualitative responses from young people within their evaluation journals and feedback forms indicated what they most liked about Telling Your Story, indicating expert facilitation from creative practitioners:

- **Variety of activities** – games, mask-making, arts and crafts.
- **Opportunities for social interaction** – meeting new people and having the opportunity *“to talk to others in a safe space”*.
- **Relaxation** within *“fun”* and *“calming”* sessions.
- **An opportunity to switch off from other things** that may be happening in their life:

*“I felt happy, and it was an escape from reality.”*

*“It makes me forget the bad things.”*



### How young people thought Telling Your Story could improve

We also asked participants how the course could be better. Although most respondents indicated that nothing should change (or they couldn't think of anything), some young people made the following suggestions:

- **More physical games and artistic activities**
- **Longer sessions or longer courses** were requested directly by some young people. Facilitators noted that some young people were upset at the end of the course and didn't want it to end.
- **The opportunity for continued communication** with facilitators.
- **More refreshments** – food/snacks

### 4.3.2 Creative practitioners' perspective

#### What worked well

Creative practitioners thought that Telling Your Story courses worked well in the following ways:

- Providing a safe and creative space for young people to express themselves:
  - Art activities helped to keep young people engaged and chatting to their peers. Relaxed conversations flowed while people were busy with their hands.
  - Positive discussions and games were enjoyed in the outdoor seating areas. One school had access to a Forest School area that provided a wonderful space for spontaneous play and outdoor activities.
  - Creativity provided an opportunity to play by making things, playing games and music.
  - Young people had the chance to create artwork without expectations or judgement, with the opportunity to create group work in small groups, which they might not otherwise have at school.
  - Young people had a chance to talk in a small group away from teachers and the general pressures of school.
- Using high-quality art materials such as acrylic paint pens, clay, and paint allowed the young people to produce better quality artwork and feel proud of their creations.
- Having well-planned and varied activities that cater to different interests and abilities, with flexibility built into the programme. Facilitators in one course recognised that the planned collective art piece wasn't inspiring participants, and young people expressed the need *“to get a chance to actually be kids”*, so facilitators adapted the programme to focus on creative play and constructive conversations instead. This allowed the young people to have more fun and engage more in the programme.
- Having the flexibility to allow some young people to work on something different and unplanned was beneficial, giving them autonomy and freedom for self-direction.

#### How Telling Your Story could improve

**Explore ways to provide peer mentor support:** It hasn't been possible to establish a peer mentor model for Telling Your Story (a core approach within Discovery College courses) because Peer Mentors cannot get to participating schools in time. However, this was piloted for one course, which worked well. Culture Shift is considering if and how to provide peer support from the alumni of participants within schools.

*“It was really nice having a qualified therapeutic arts counsellor and drama-therapist working in collaboration and that brought real richness alongside our peer mentor who was a very grounding and supportive younger male presence for the group.”*

TELLING YOUR STORY CREATIVE PRACTITIONER

**Work with schools to identify participants interested in art and creativity:** Having young people join part-way through the course to fill vacancies after young people dropped out (often because of a lack of interest in creativity) was disruptive.

**Ensure that there is good communication with the school before and during the course:** Some groups were disrupted because of Covid-19, with sessions cancelled. Staff shortages in one school led to participants unclear about when sessions would be delivered. Within another school, facilitators requested to be in a different room with a sink and no carpet so that they could get messy and creative. Although these may be isolated incidents, good communication with the school could help to avoid any future issues.

**Explore opportunities for a longer course and pilot this:** In section 3.4.10 we recommended piloting longer Discovery College courses to see if they resulted in a bigger increase in wellbeing. Given that Telling Your Story courses operate on a similar model, it is worth piloting if more sessions would help more young people to achieve the goals that they set for themselves, as well as the other Telling Your Story outcomes. However, we recognise that this would require additional funding per course, so may not be possible.

### **Recommendations for Telling Your Story:**


- Work with schools to ensure that young people who are referred have an interest in art or creativity (this could be reflected in the referral form) and that an appropriate room is available for sessions.
- Review the delivery plan to allow more space for young people to play outdoor physical games as the space allows.
- Consider the potential for courses to be longer.

## 4.4 The difference made by Telling Your Story

### **The intended outcomes of Telling Your Story are:**

1. Young people experience increased subjective mental and emotional wellbeing.
2. Young people are less socially isolated and feel more connected with their peers.
3. Young people have increased creative skills.
4. Young people have increased skills at expressing and managing their mental health and feelings.
5. Young people feel more resilient.
6. Young people have achieved what they wanted from the course.

#### 4.4.1 Outcome 1: Young people experience increased subjective mental and emotional wellbeing

	Telling Your Story had a statistically significant increase in the average mental wellbeing scores of young people participating.
<b>46%</b>	of young people had a meaningful increase in their wellbeing after participating in Telling Your Story.
<b>19%</b>	reduction in the number of people with low mental wellbeing.

We measured participants' subjective mental wellbeing using the 35-point Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and the four measures of personal wellbeing developed by ONS. The results are summarised in Table 7.

*“I am a lot happier. I know how to have fun.”*

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

SWEMWBS summary of results for Telling Your Story	Before the course	After the course	Change	Positive change?	Statistically significant change?	P value
<b>Total no. of responses</b>	43	43	43			
<b>% Low wellbeing</b>	79.1%	60.5%	-18.6%			
<b>% Moderate wellbeing</b>	20.9%	37.2%	16.3%			
<b>% High wellbeing</b>	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%			
<b>Mean score</b>	19.14	21.63	2.49	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes<sup>4</sup></b>	P < 0.001 <P < 0.005
<b>Standard deviation</b>	3.85	5.09	4.62			
<b>No. of YP with a meaningful positive change</b>			20			
<b>% with a meaningful positive change (&gt;2 pts)</b>			46.5%			

Table 7 - Summary of SWEMWBS results for Telling Your Story

<sup>4</sup> Using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test. See here: <http://www.biostathandbook.com/wilcoxonsignedrank.html>



Figure 14 - Change in SWEMWBS Telling Your Story

Of the 43 Telling Your Story participants who completed both pre- and post-course (distance travelled) surveys, 20 (46.5%) reported a meaningful positive change in their wellbeing (of 2 points or more).

The mean average increase was 2.49 points (from 19.14 to 21.63, see Figure 14), which is higher than Discovery College arts courses (at 1.4-points) and is a statistically significant improvement in average wellbeing at a 95% confidence level (using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test).

Every Telling Your Story course ended with a positive change in young people's wellbeing.

Skilled facilitators helped young people to feel safe and open up about some of the challenges that are going on in their lives and, through creativity, find a way through them.

#### 4.4.2 Outcome 2: Young people are less socially isolated and feel more connected with their peers

##### Working as part of a group

<b>96%</b>	of young people were observed as working as part of a group.
<b>91%</b>	of young people were observed as contributing to the group creation of artwork

Participating in Telling Your Story and group work through games and working on collaborative artwork gave young people the opportunity for close listening and teamwork. Creative practitioners observed young people sharing materials and helping each other in activities, resulting in the formation of solid friendships, whilst 'circle time' helped young people to improve their listening skills.

*“It has made me talk to people that I wouldn't on my own.”*

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT



## TELLING YOUR STORY

The sessions also enabled some young people to have a voice in the group and improve their relationships with others, while others used the space to share and reflect on personal issues and resolve conflicts. Facilitators said that new friendships were formed in several groups.

*“Friendships were formed in the eight weeks. They all left the building together, laughing and in good spirits. Two young people became friends and made plans to see each other outside of school.”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATIONS

### Feeling connected to others

**49%** of young people reported feeling more connected to others

49% of Telling Your Story participants (17 out of 35) reported feeling more connected to others, using the 'distance travelled' outcomes wheel, from an average of 2.89 (out of 5) before the course to 3.42 after, see Figure 15.

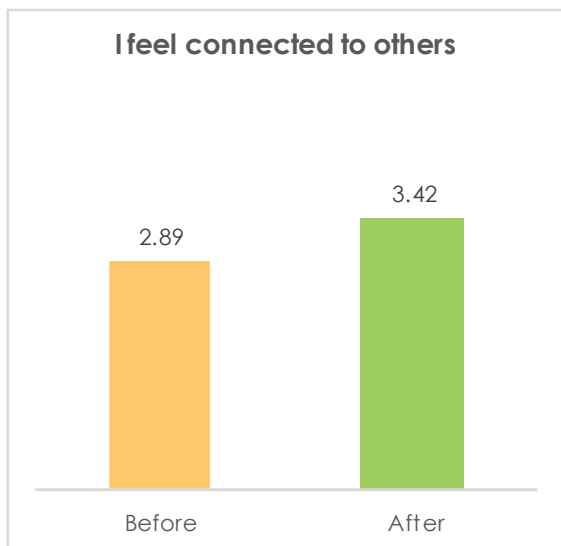


Figure 15 - Feeling connected to others - Telling Your Story

*“I enjoyed it very much, the course helped me socialise with people that have different interests than me. I particularly liked the canvas bag painting.”*

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

### Get on and work with others

**79%** of young people said that the course helped them to get on and work with others

We asked young people in the survey if Telling Your Story had helped them to get on and work with others, and if so, how. Qualitative analysis of responses indicates that 79.5% of participants (31 out of 39) thought that it had. Responses indicated that group activities enabled young people to:

## TELLING YOUR STORY

- Work together on group artwork.
- Speak to others in a different year group.
- Feel more confident around people.
- Work together in a team.

*“Yes, I now believe in teamwork.”*

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

Facilitator observations frequently noted how young people started the course quietly and sometimes reluctant to engage, but as part of the process they opened up about some of the challenges they were experiencing at school and home, and in doing so found common ground with others and made new friends.

*“Aria (not her real name) started the course a little down and quiet but soon had a voice to express herself. She often discussed LGBTQ+ issues and difficulties at home. She made some firm friends and I’d not realised she didn’t know the other members of the group before we started. She was a key member of the group by the end.”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION NOTE

### 4.4.3 Outcome 3: Young people have increased creative skills.

Creative skills and how they are seen as a wider part of wellbeing

**88%** of young people were observed as learning a new creative skill

Facilitators noted how the programme delivered on ‘being creative’ through the variety of creative activities provided, both in terms of making tangible artwork, as well as games and music providing many spontaneous creative moments. The quiet and absorbed creative activities were effective in helping young people to develop their focus and concentration that required a level of patience and perseverance to complete.

The range of activities allowed the young people to explore different and new



## TELLING YOUR STORY

creative mediums and find what they enjoyed the most. Facilitators observed 88% of young people learning a new creative skill.

Evaluation journals show new skills developed or learnt that young people don't normally get a chance to do, including:

- **Visual arts and crafts** such as drawing, clay modelling, painting, plasticine, collage, mask making, tie-dye, graffiti, paper mâché, bookbinding, and making sand mandalas.

*“I really enjoyed graffiti-style drawing as I don't get a chance to do that at school.”*

- **Creative writing** including storytelling and poetry.
- **Music** – playing the guitar.

*“The course was amazing because I don't get to do this stuff at home.”*

### TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANTS



### Using creativity to feel good

43%

of young people reported an increase in feeling that being creative helps them to feel good

Young people participating in Telling Your Story broadly already described themselves as being able to use creativity before the course, reporting a relatively high baseline average of

## TELLING YOUR STORY

3.6 (out of 5) before the course and 4.24 after, an increase of 0.38 points (using the pre- and post-course 'distance travelled' outcomes wheel).

Qualitative responses show that some participants had come to a new understanding about how creativity was linked to their wellbeing, as they listed new skills in their evaluation journal as being able to *“express themselves”, “be more relaxed”, “more patient”* and *“listen”*.

*“The young people took to different creative skills, some flourished working in the sketchbooks, some when working large scale & with words, others were most engaged when working with a tactile, sensory medium such as clay or paint. The playful and more unusual activities were a great opportunity for the young people to play, and let go and explore.”*

### FACILITATOR'S OBSERVATIONS

Facilitators noted one young person as already being a gifted guitar player and who learnt new musical skills such as simple improvisations and riffs that others could join in with; taking on a musical leadership role boosted his self-esteem.

#### **4.4.4 Outcome 4: Young people have increased skills at expressing feelings and managing their mental health**

##### Sharing thoughts with others and expressing feelings

<b>95%</b>	of young people were observed as sharing their thoughts about a subject
<b>89%</b>	of young people were observed expressing their feelings in a positive way

Participants were observed as opening up to facilitators and their peers, with 95% sharing their thoughts on a subject and 89% observed as expressing their feelings in a positive and often creative way. The safe and relaxed environment that facilitators created within sessions contributed to young people feeling able to talk about themselves and the things that are going on in their life.

*“It was nice to talk about things in a safe environment.”*

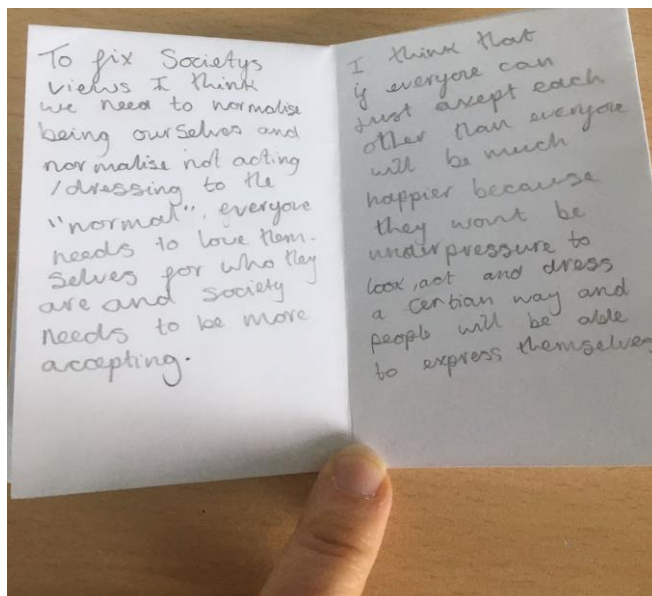
### TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

## TELLING YOUR STORY

Facilitators noted how engaging in mindful creative activities side-by-side enabled young people to start conversations with them and their peers in a more relaxed way:

*“There is something very special about the kind of relaxed conversations while people are busy with their hands and partially focused on another activity.”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION



### New strategies to manage their mental health

Within evaluation journals, we asked young people what they would do differently to manage their mental health after the course. Young people indicated that they had learnt and would put in place new strategies to support their mental health, including:

- **Coping strategies:** Distractions, being artistic to calm down, breathe, do creative stuff, sleep, going to a quiet space, and *“find something to distract me when I'm upset”*.
- **Self-care:** Eating healthily, exercising more, playing, going for a walk, taking a break when needed.
- **Seeking support:** Speaking to someone they trust and going to counselling.
- **Self-esteem:** Not comparing themselves to others, being themselves, having a better view on life, gaining confidence, not being so quiet.
- **Emotional regulation:** Not being shy, not bottling-up feelings/emotions, being more open, not getting so mad.
- **Enjoyable creative and social activities:** Listening to music, drawing, seeing friends, and creating art to express emotions.

*“Jenny (not her real name) shared that joining this program has helped her manage her mental health and feels she has achieved her goal of being happy, making friends and feeling less awkward. She still finds it hard to talk about her feelings but does this really well in her creative writing and poetry.”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION NOTE OF TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

- **Learning to let go of things:** To not care what others think and to not worry about things that have already happened.



## TELLING YOUR STORY

Facilitators also observed how young people had changed in their approach to emotional regulation throughout the course:

*“Ada (not her real name) talked a lot about her anger issues and how she wanted to be a different person, a better person. She threw herself into the sessions. She said that she was very different in our sessions because she felt calm. [The mental health lead in the school] noticed she’s a lot calmer, a bit more grounded and has a better understanding of how to process her thoughts and feelings.”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION NOTE OF TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

### 4.4.5 Outcome 5: Young people feel more resilient

As noted in section 3.3.5, the Evaluation Steering Group suggested that we might expect to see resilience demonstrated in young people becoming more confident, believing in themselves, being open to trying new things and having a sense of purpose. Below we examine the evidence of whether these things have been achieved.

#### Confidence

**54%** of young people participating in Telling Your Story reported feeling more confident

Facilitators frequently observed young people as not engaging or looking “*sad*” at the beginning of the course. However, the relaxed atmosphere and creative activities helped young people to express themselves, discover their talents and feel more confident about talking to other people.

*“I feel more confident. Yay, I did it!”*

TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT IN THEIR EVALUATION JOURNAL

Before participating in Telling Your Story, young people scored themselves an average of 2.63 (out of 5) for feeling confident, and 3.21 after the course; an increase of 0.58 points, the highest of all domains evaluated through the Outcomes Wheel for Telling Your Story. 54% of participants (19 out of 35) reported an increase in feeling confident.

#### Open to trying new things

**96%** of young people were observed as trying something new

## TELLING YOUR STORY

Gentle encouragement from skilled facilitators led to participants trying new creative techniques as well as participating in new activities. 96% of participants were observed by Creative practitioners as trying something new.

*“Chrissie (not her real name)– a particular talent and enjoyment at visual art. In the final sessions took the step of trying out different ideas in a sketchbook before completing her finished work. A natural to take art education further if she wants to!”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION NOTE

*Feeling comfortable being their true selves*

**49%** of young people participating in Telling Your Story reported feeling more comfortable being their true selves

Before participating in Telling Your Story, young people rated themselves as 2.97 (out of 5) at feeling comfortable being their true selves and 3.38 after, an increase of 0.41 points; 49% of young people reported an increase.

### How one participant ‘found herself’ again after Telling Your Story

Sarah was referred to Telling Your Story as she had recently moved to the school, in a totally new area, after her parents had split up. The facilitator observed Sarah as initially having low self-esteem but a keen interest in creative activities. Sarah's wellbeing scores were low before participating in the course and she noted in her evaluation journal that she wanted to feel better about herself, relax and have fun.

Despite being new to the school, the facilitator noted that Sarah shared openly and contributed positively to the group, enjoying storytelling activities, crafting through making shoes and making calm boxes. They noted that small group and non-pressured creative activities allowed Sarah to ‘find herself again’. Sarah said that the course *“opened a doorway to so much more”* and reflected in her evaluation journal that she had met her goal and found new ways to manage her mental health, including *“being artistic to calm down, breathe and talk”*. Sarah's evaluation scores indicated an increase in all outcome areas and a significant 13-point increase in her mental wellbeing.

### 4.4.6 Outcome 6: Young people have achieved what they wanted from the course

**58%** of Telling Your Story participants reported that they had achieved the goal they set for themselves.



## TELLING YOUR STORY

Within their evaluation journals, young people were asked to set a goal for themselves at the beginning and then reflect on whether they thought they had achieved it at the end of the course. Young people's goals included:

- **Creative goals** such as: *“get better at drawing”, “be more creative”* and *“just do art”*.
- **Wellbeing goals:** *“Enjoy [it] to stay calm and happy!”*, *“make friends”*, *“to be less sad when I get home”*, *“to have fun and enjoy the session”*, *“my confidence”*, *“having a fun time and feeling better”*, and *“to be more happy, make friends and be less awkward”*.

Of the 69 participants who both set a goal and reported on their progress at the end, 58% reported that they had achieved it, see Figure 22.

*“I achieved my goal of being somewhat confident being myself and letting ideas flow.”*

### TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT



However, 42% of young people thought that their goal was still a work in progress.

*“I think I kind of achieved my goal, but I need to be myself instead of being shy at school.”*

### TELLING YOUR STORY PARTICIPANT

Figure 22 - Young people's achievement of the goals that they set for themselves – Telling Your Story

#### 4.4.7 Conclusions, how change was achieved and Telling Your Story's contribution to change

There is good evidence that Telling Your Story has had a positive difference in children and young people participating. Almost half of the participants (47%) had a meaningfully positive increase in their wellbeing, and the programme had a statistically significant increase in young people's average wellbeing scores. Young people reported feeling more connected to others and have developed new creative ways to feel good and support their mental health. Most participants enjoyed the course and felt supported and valued by facilitators who helped them to develop new creative skills and ways to express themselves within a calm and relaxing environment.

### How creativity contributed to change

**There is good evidence that creativity was an important contributing factor to the recorded outcomes.** All participants engaged in creative activities, learning new skills in music, crafts and storytelling. This allowed the young people to explore different creative mediums and find what they enjoyed the most. 88% were observed as learning a new creative skill and almost half (43%) reported an increase in feeling that being creative helps them to feel good (the baseline was fairly high, at 3.6 out of 5).

*"The programme delivered on 'being creative' through the variety of creative activities provided, both in terms of making activities where something tangible was made and the games and music where there were many spontaneous creative moments."*

#### FACILITATOR'S OBSERVATIONS

Qualitative evidence shows that creativity made an important contribution to this change, with young people reporting feeling calm and more connected to others through the course, finding new ways to express themselves and support their mental health.

Producing individual and collective artwork, the support of peers and positive affirmations from facilitators led to improved self-esteem in participants, with 49% reporting an increase in feeling comfortable being their true selves.

### Creating an environment for creative expression and connection with others

**The programme provided a safe and supportive space for the participants** to work together in groups as a team, open up to peers, be thoughtful, listen to others, and find common interests. 95% of Telling Your Story participants felt supported and valued throughout the course. Young people were encouraged to work together in a collaborative way. This allowed them to learn from each other and build positive relationships, leading to reduced isolation, with 79% indicating that the course helped them get on and work with others and almost half (49%) reported feeling more connected to others.



## TELLING YOUR STORY

### *Benefits of working in schools*

Unlike Discovery College, Telling Your Story courses are delivered on school premises (although both are after school). This had the benefit of enabling a higher attendance rate (at 68% overall) compared to Discovery College arts courses (at 58% overall). This may have contributed to a slightly higher increase in average wellbeing reported by Telling Your Story participants than those participating in Discovery College arts courses.

Although a few young people were noted as being frustrated at the beginning of sessions with something that happened in their school day, being in a school environment did not seem to be detrimental to participants, as they were away from the usual school pressures and learning in a very different environment to school lessons.

# Space to Create in numbers

Space to Create is an artist-led creative wellbeing programme run by Culture Shift, delivered in primary schools. Creative courses aim to give children a safe space to develop their creativity, confidence, and self-esteem so that they can cope with the challenges in their lives.

118 Children supported

12 Courses evaluated

6 Primary schools

"The art and kindness ... I love it!"

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

77%

of children felt supported and valued through their course

87%

of children enjoyed their course



53%

Felt more creative  
(using a distance-travelled scale)



53%

Feel more confident



75%

Increase in identifying as helping others or grouped with friends  
(using Blob Tree evaluation tool)



49%

Reported an increase in feeling good in groups



96

Children achieved a Discover Arts Award



98%

Observed as trying something new



"I REALLY liked circle time, I could share what I felt and it really helped me. When I talk it makes me not worry so much and not be upset."

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

## 5. SPACE TO CREATE

### 5.1 About Space to Create

Space to Create is an artist-led creative wellbeing programme run by Culture Shift, delivered in primary schools for pupils in Key Stage 2, typically to 9-10 year olds. It aims to give children a safe space to develop their creative skills, confidence, and self-esteem so that they can cope with the challenges in their lives. It is an 8-10-week programme, funded by BBC Children in Need, and is part of a wider programme of activity delivered by Culture Shift with a focus on children's mental health and wellbeing. Courses are delivered after school by two creative practitioners, all of whom have experience supporting vulnerable children and young people, some of whom are qualified art therapists.

### 5.2 How Space to Create was evaluated

We developed the following child-appropriate tools to evaluate Space to Create:

- **Distance-travelled Outcomes Wheel** whereby children colour-in a before and after score that best illustrates their feelings within four outcome domains (feeling creative, feeling good in themselves, confidence, feeling good in groups), see Appendix 6.
- **Blob tree:** A creative evaluation method (developed by Wilson & Long, 2005) used for children attending Space to Create sessions, to help them describe how they are feeling at that point in time (see Appendix 7).
- **Feedback form** (see Appendix 8): This enabled us to assess children's satisfaction with the course and capture qualitative data about if and how they benefited.
- **Review of facilitators' reports:** Facilitators wrote up their observations on young people's progress and their reflections on the course within a brief report, which provided both quantitative and qualitative data on children's outcomes.

#### Appraisal of evaluation methods

- **Challenges with the Outcomes Wheel:** Although distance-travelled scales such as the Outcomes Wheel provide self-reported measurable results, there are challenges with these types of self-assessment tools for young children, which meant that the increase in outcomes rated by the children themselves was considerably lower than those observed by facilitators. This may be because:
  - An inflated baseline assessment was noted as a likelihood for a few participants in facilitator observations.
  - The scale represents a point in time and is therefore influenced by the child's mood at that moment and was particularly evident if children had been upset by something that day or session.
  - Additionally, facilitators noted that some children misunderstood the Outcomes Wheel, starting to colour in all sections rather than the one that most reflected their feelings.

- **Quantitative facilitator observations:** The Observations Form may be influenced by facilitator bias. Observation Forms could be strengthened and simplified in line with the recommended changes for Discovery College arts courses (see section 3.4.10).

We recommend strengthening evaluation methods for Space to Create in section 5.5.7.

### 5.3 Reach and young people's engagement

#### 5.3.1 Artists and schools involved

<b>6</b>	artists involved
<b>6</b>	primary schools involved

#### 5.3.2 Number of participants

<b>118</b>	children and young people participated in 12 Space to Create courses; an average of 9.8 participants per course
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118 children and young people from six primary schools participated in 12 Space to Create Courses, as outlined in Figure 16.

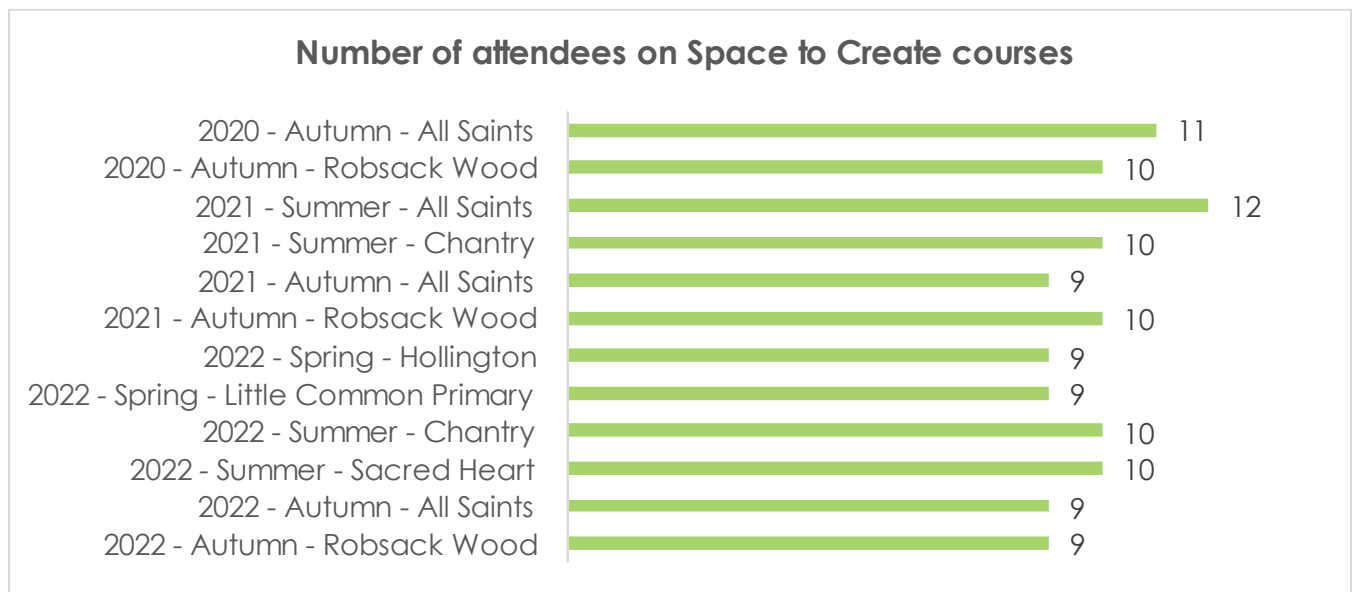


Figure 16 - Registered Participants Breakdown, Space to Create

### 5.3.3 Attendance

**85%** average attendance rate of Space to Create Courses; an average of 8 participants per session

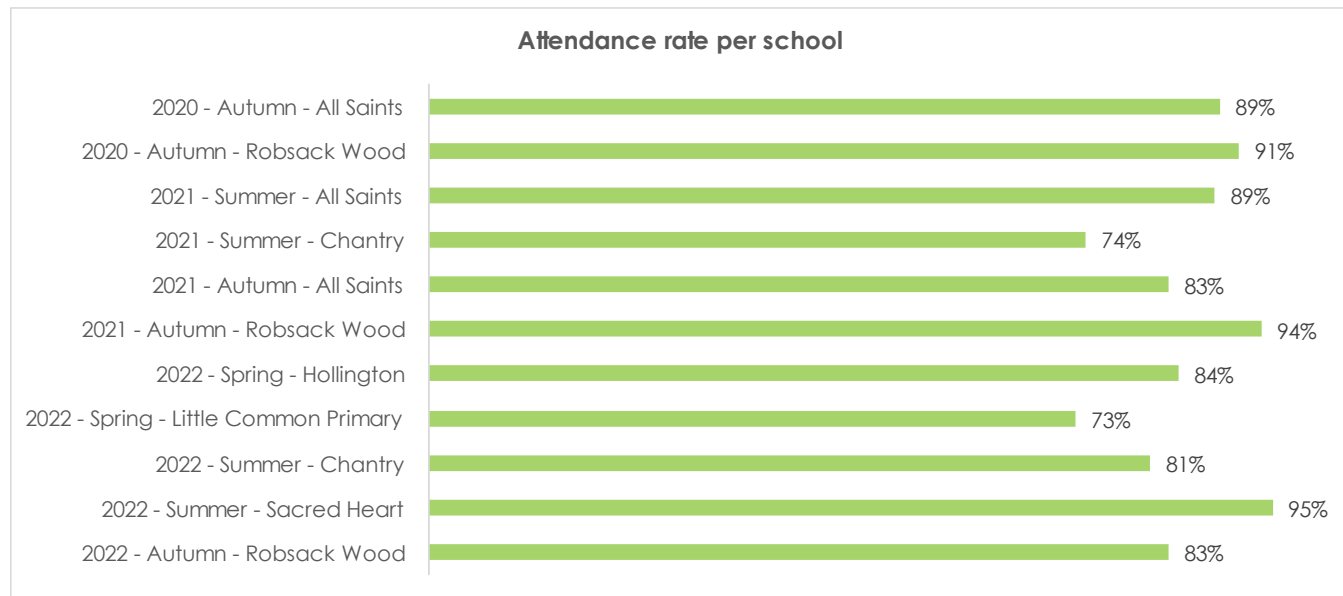


Figure 17 - Attendance rate per school for Space to Create Courses<sup>5</sup>

Attendance to Space to Create courses was generally very good (at 85%, an average of 8 participants per session), aided by the fact that sessions were scheduled at the end of the school day, although a few children dropped out part way through. Covid-19 impacted on the attendance rate with some courses delivered during the pandemic. One facilitator noted that children in some sessions were anxious because of rising Covid-19 cases in the area and school, which may have affected attendance and children’s anxiety levels.

### 5.3.4 Characteristics of young people engaged

Children are identified and referred to Space to Create by the school, typically because they are struggling with something at home (e.g., poverty, parental separation, bereavement, or a sibling’s disability), because they are experiencing anxiety or problems with social skills, or because they have Special Educational Needs or a disability.

Facilitators noted that careful selection of children is crucial to ensure a positive and enjoyable outcome for the whole group, including:

- The desire and ability to attend school for a further 105 minutes, in a seated setting.
- The ability to gain some enjoyment from creative activities.

<sup>5</sup> 2022 – Autumn All Saints not included in the chart due to a lack of data.



Facilitators noted that it was detrimental to the session if children were challenged by sitting in one room for the session and that some children needed additional physical and breakout activities to support them through the session. Space to Create is intended for children who are struggling at school, so more flexibility may be needed from facilitators to tailor the sessions to the needs of the young people participating (see 5.4.2).

## 5.4 How effectively was the programme delivered?

### 5.4.1 Feedback from children

#### NPS

<b>49</b>	Space to Create Net Promoter Score
<b>9</b>	average satisfaction rating (out of 10)
<b>87%</b>	of participants said that they enjoyed Space to Create

87% of children said that they enjoyed Space to Create.

*“I feel great about Space to Create”.*

Net Promoter Score (NPS) measures customer satisfaction (see section 3.3.2 for further information). Space to Create has a good NPS of 49 (higher than both Discovery College arts courses and Telling Your Story), with 65% of children rating it 9 or 10 out of 10. This may be because children are more likely to give a positive score than teenagers. However, 16% of Space to Create participants gave it a lower score of 0-6. We explore what children liked about Space to Create and what they wanted to improve over.

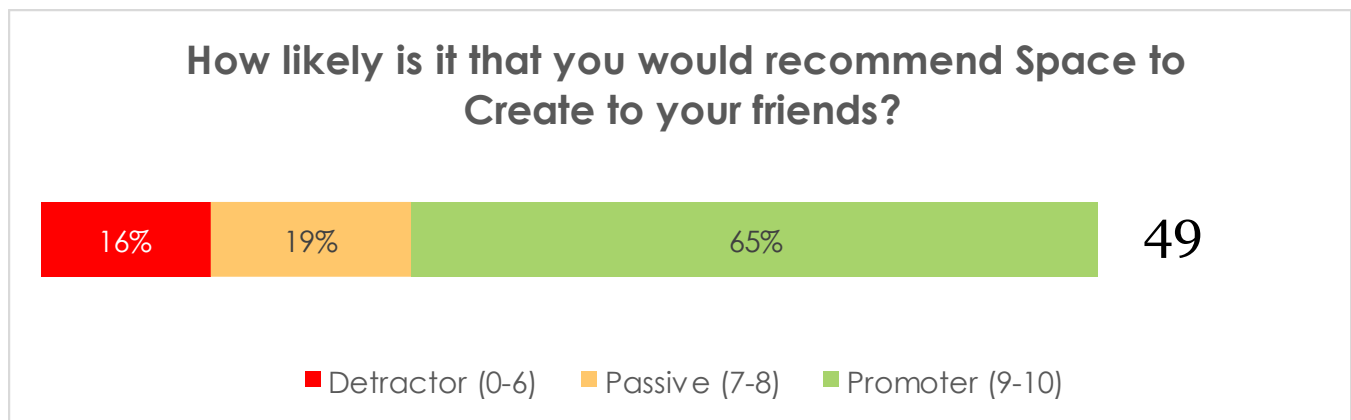


Figure 18 - Net Promoter Score - Space to Create (N=97)

Year	Term	Course name	Average score out of 10	No. of responses
2020	Autumn	Robsack Wood	9	8
2020	Autumn	All Saints Yr 5	8	9
2021	Summer	All Saints Y4	10	10
2021	Summer	Chantry Y5	9	7
2021	Autumn	All Saints	9	6
2021	Autumn	Robsack Wood	8	9
2022	Spring	Hollington Primary	8	7
2022	Spring	Little Common Primary	8	9
2022	Summer	Chantry	8	9
2022	Summer	Sacred Heart	7	10
2022	Autumn	All Saints	10	8
2022	Autumn	Robsack Wood	9	8

Table 8 - List of Course per year and term

*“The art and kindness...I love it.”*

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

Feeling valued and supported



Facilitators helped to create a relaxed and supportive environment where 77% of children felt supported and valued, see Figure 19. However, this is less than Telling Your Story (at 95%) and Discovery College arts courses (89%).

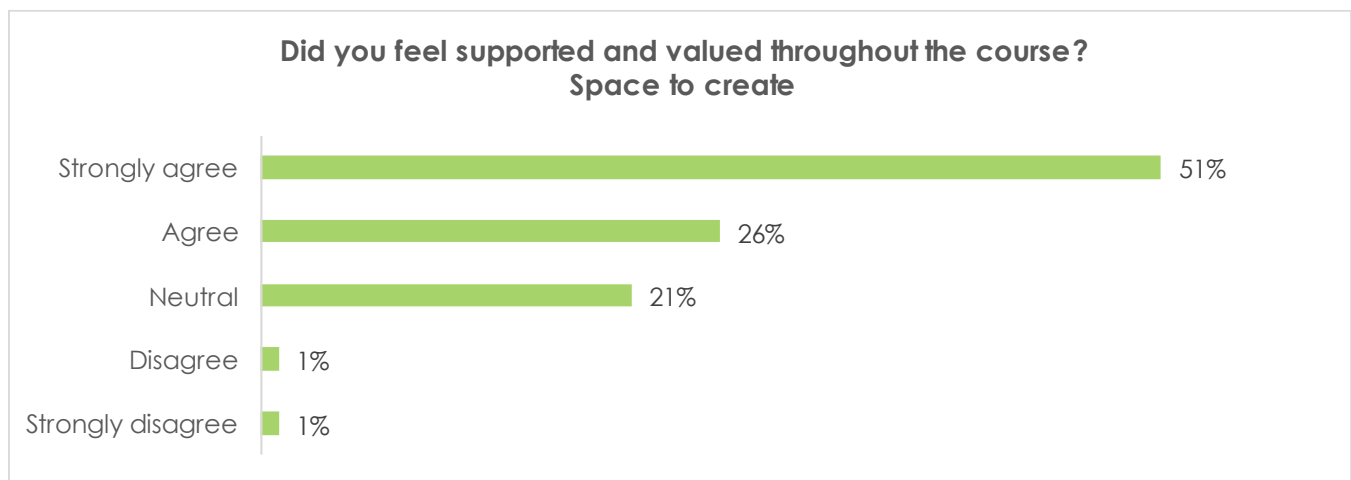


Figure 19 - Feeling supported and valued throughout the course - Space to Create (N=100)

## SPACE TO CREATE

Given the nature of children referred to Space to Create and who are likely to benefit from it, a more tailored approach may be needed to support neurodiverse children and those experiencing anxiety.

### What children thought was good about Space to Create

In feedback forms, young people said that they liked the following:

- **Arts and crafts** – drawing, painting, sculpture, printing, crafting, sewing, making mugs/plates/cushions, etc.

*“I loved doing creative things...I hope I can do this next year.”*

- **Music** - playing keyboard, guitar, musical animals game, etc.
- **Outdoor activities** such as football and playing outside.
- **Social interaction** – meeting and playing with friends.
- **Personal growth** – having fun and feeling relaxed.

*“I get to create things and have fun while I do it. I can control my anxiety.”*

- Food and snacks



### How children thought Space to Create could improve

Children generally gave very good feedback about the course (*“it’s already good”, “it’s the best”, “it’s amazing”*). Those who gave suggestions wanted sessions to be longer, with more time for specific activities such as play breaks outside and more creative work.

*“Have longer time and let you do more creative things.”*

*“By giving us more time and space to write.”*

Some children suggested a wider variety of snacks and that they wanted other participants to behave differently, e.g., listening to others.

### **5.4.2 Improvements suggested by facilitators**

Within their reports, creative facilitators gave the following suggestions for improvement:

- **Spend more time on feelings and group discussion** to help children talk more about themselves with additional opportunities for group and individual discussion. One facilitator noted that this might help more children feel supported and valued through the course.

## SPACE TO CREATE

- **More diverse activities and physical games** – cater to the different interests and strengths of children and help them to let off steam at the end of a long school day.

*"Including more diverse activities, such as drama and dance, would allow children to explore different creative outlets and find new ways to express themselves."*

- **Reflections with children at the end of the course through open discussion on what went well for them and what they achieved.**

*"Perhaps we would benefit from an extra 'rounding up' session at the end after feedback and report completion – to reflect back to the children what went well for them and what they achieved."*

- Facilitator reports often suggest that **some children and young people would benefit from additional and individual support** (such as art therapy) outside of Space to Create, which can be beneficial for children who are struggling with group dynamics or have emotional regulation difficulties.

- **Consider a mandatory check-in with the school halfway through the course** – facilitators suggested in-person check-ins between the school and lead facilitator halfway through the course could be helpful to voice concerns and flag up children who need extra support.

- **More parental involvement** - involve parents more actively to help their children continue to develop their creativity and social skills at home.

*"Encouraging parents to participate in the programme would be a valuable step towards embedding the learning into the children's lives outside of the programme."*

### SPACE TO CREATE FACILITATOR

#### **Recommendations for Space to Create:**

- Incorporate more reflective practice in supervision sessions with facilitators to help them adapt sessions to the needs of children so that all children feel supported and valued, particularly those who are neurodiverse or who struggle to sit for long periods of time. This may include more physical activities, breaks and more one-to-one and group discussions.
- Incorporate a mandatory check-in with the school part way through the programme to talk about how children are doing and any additional support they may need.
- Incorporate a celebration event with parents in the last session to reflect back to children about their talents and strengths, to help boost children's self-esteem further and encourage parents to continue/promote creative activities at home.

## 5.5 The difference made by Space to Create

### 5.5.1 Intended outcomes

The intended outcomes of Space to Create are different to other Discovery Arts programmes evaluated, as outlined over.

**The intended outcomes of Space to Create are:**

1. Children and young people feel more creative
2. Children and young people feel good about themselves
3. Children and young people feel confident
4. Children and young people feel good in groups.

### 5.5.2 Outcome 1: Children and young people feel more creative

**53%** of children reported feeling more creative

**96%** of children were observed by facilitators as developing a new creative skill

#### Creative skills

Space to Create provided a variety of creative activities for children, including arts & crafts, games, storytelling and music. 96% were observed as learning or developing a new creative skill. Participants learned new creative skills such as mask-making, foam-cutting, 3D art, slime-making, sensory art, clay sculptures, building with paper and sticks, painting, and printing techniques (such as making cushions or wall hangings, cyanotype, block printing and heat transfer), machine sewing and hand stitch, miniature theatre-making, playing and performing on the keyboard, and self-expression through art.

Participants were able to freely express their creativity in a safe and supportive environment. The calm space helped children to feel relaxed, engaged and focused.



## SPACE TO CREATE

Working on creative projects as part of a group helped children to develop their ability to communicate effectively and foster a sense of community.

*"It makes me feel like a member of the group. I put the artwork in my bedroom in a special drawer."*

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

53% of children (44 out of 83) said that they felt more creative after the Space to Create course (using the distance travelled pre- and post-course self-evaluation Outcomes Wheel).

Children's mean average scores for feeling creative (out of 5), increased from 3.76 to 4.42 (see Figure 20), an average of 0.66 points.

*"I like doing creative things, being with my friends and have a lot of fun".*

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

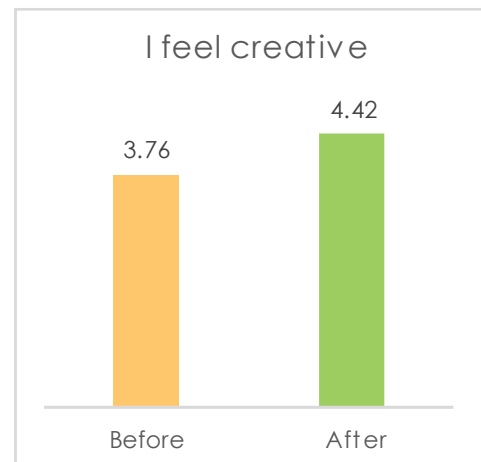


Figure 20 - Feeling more creative in Space to Create courses (scores out of 5). 83 responses

### Using creativity to support wellbeing

**99%** of Space to Create participants were observed as sharing thoughts about the subject

**99%** of Space to Create participants were observed as expressing feelings in a positive way

Participants felt relaxed within sessions and took advantage of group discussions to share their thoughts about what was happening in their lives, which helped them to see that they could talk to others when needed.

*"I REALLY liked circle time, I could share what I felt and it really helped me. When I talk it makes me not worry so much and not be upset."*

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

Facilitators observed several participants as using creativity to feel calm, happier and express themselves.

*"Participant found solace in 3D making and musical activities, helping to calm her restlessness and develop her self-awareness by sharing her feelings during group activities."*



### How one participant found creativity to help open-up about family bereavements.

Samuel\* was referred to Space to Create due to significant poverty at home and a baby death in the immediate family. Facilitators noted Samuel as loving to draw within sessions and being full of imagination, with a rich inner world. His artwork was noted as having an expressive narrative, a positive outlet for his feelings and providing a space to be himself.

During sessions, Samuel was able to open up during sharing time about his Grandad, who died two years previously. Samuel's feedback form indicated that Space to Create had been his favourite thing to do and he had learnt how to express his feelings through the course:

*“[I learnt] that when I feel sad, I can talk to someone. I felt happier when I was in Space to Create. I love making stuff.”*

Samuel's evaluation form showed a good increase in feeling creative, feeling good about myself and feeling good in groups.

\*Name changed to protect identity of the person.

### 5.5.3 Outcome 2: Children and young people feel good about themselves

**52%** of children participating in Space to Create reported an increase in feeling good about themselves

Facilitators ensured that children were listened to and validated for their individual creative contributions, behaviour, feelings, ideas and anecdotes in discussions.

Facilitators noted that each child went on a different journey and developed self-esteem in different ways. There were participants whose self-esteem was improved through validation of their creative achievements, discussion with the whole group, having a space for open-ended conversations with adults and peers, or enjoying the thrill of entertaining people and making them laugh.





## SPACE TO CREATE

Children's mean average scores for feeling good about themselves, increased from 3.42 (out of 5) to 4.11 (see Figure 21), an average of 0.69 points.

52% of children (43 out of 83) reported an increase in feeling good about themselves after Space to Create.

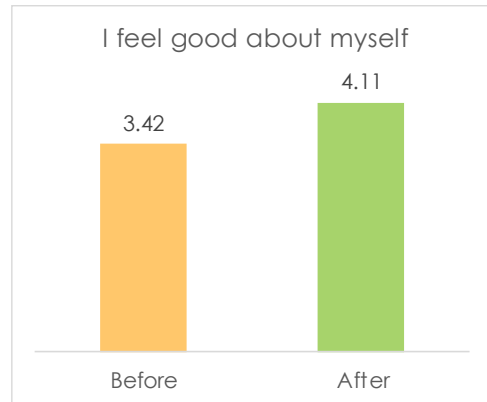


Figure 21 – Feeling good about themselves in Space to Create courses (scores out of 5). 83 responses

### 5.5.4 Outcome 3: Children and young people feel confident

**53%** of children participating in Space to Create reported an increase in feeling confident

Children's confidence was built through:

- Group circle/sharing and communication activities gave children a voice and the opportunity to express themselves.
- Activities involving creative expression that provided opportunities to succeed without judgement and receive positive affirmation.
- Consistent positive reinforcement and encouragement from facilitators helped children feel proud of their accomplishments and encouraged them to keep trying.

*"I liked the teachers because they were calm and they listened."*

- A sense of safety and support within the group allowed children to feel comfortable and build relationships with other participants.

*"It's been amazing to see how much these children have grown and changed over the course of the programme. They've become more comfortable expressing themselves, taking risks, and building relationships. It's been truly inspiring."*

#### SPACE TO CREATE FACILITATOR REPORT

Pre- and post-course responses indicate that 53% of young people (44 out of 83) felt more confident after Space to Create. Their mean average scores (out of 5), increased from 3.22 to 3.88, an average of 0.66 points. Facilitators' reports noted that most children exhibited an increase in confidence.

*“All the children exhibited an increase in confidence in the group setting to some degree, this was either through an increased ability to use their voice and share things about themselves, growing friendships, the ability to ask for what they wanted or needed.”*

SPACE TO CREATE FACILITATOR

**98%** of Space to Create participants were observed as trying something new

Participants also demonstrated confidence by trying something new, including:

- Attending the sessions and participating in new creative activities
- Sharing deeply about their experiences, breaking out of their shyness and participating more actively in the group, both in games and in circle time.
- Gradually finding their voice in the group, including sharing information about themselves and their experiences at home.



*“Florence (not her real name) was initially quite reserved and hesitant to participate in the group activities. However, as the weeks went on, she started to open up and engage more fully. She was very creative and enjoyed experimenting with different materials and techniques. She showed a lot of resilience and perseverance, especially when she encountered challenges or setbacks. By the end of the course, she had gained a lot of confidence and was much more willing to take risks and try new things.”*

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION NOTE

**5.5.5 Outcome 4: Children and young people feel good in groups**

**49%** of Space to Create participants reported an increase in feeling good in groups

99%	of Space to Create participants were observed as working part of the group
93%	of Space to Create participants were observed as contributing to the creation of group artwork

Facilitators noted that plenty of time was given to group games and discussions, including an opportunity to help children feel more comfortable in groups through:

- **Ample opportunities to develop their friendship and social skills.**

*“There was a lot of talk in the final session about how they could continue to make artwork together after the project was completed. Real bonds were formed and many of the children learned that they could lean on each other for support when experiencing challenging situations.”*

SPACE TO CREATE FACILITATOR

- The music sessions, circle games, and making activities allowed children to **develop their teamwork skills**. The small group size and less pressured targets allowed the children to bond and work together in a caring and inclusive manner. However, established roles within the group posed challenges for some children, so facilitated discussions were held to ensure everyone had a voice.

*“I like working with other people because we can share our ideas and make things together.”*

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

- **Developing their listening skills.** Facilitators modelled good listening skills, which in turn helped children to learn the importance of giving everyone a voice in groups and support their friends:

*“I think these children learnt that listening is important: of giving others the respect you’d like yourself.”*

SPACE TO CREATE FACILITATOR

- An opportunity to **express their emotions positively** through discussions about issues affecting them.

## SPACE TO CREATE

Facilitators' reports highlighted that some children found group work challenging due to being overwhelmed or shy, whilst others thrived on it. Facilitators adapted future sessions incorporating different strategies for children who respond differently to activities such as circle time.

49% of children (41 out of 83) reported an increase in feeling good in groups after Space to Create. Their mean average scores increased from 3.30 (out of 5) to 3.98 (see Figure 22), an average of 0.68 points.



Figure 22 – Feeling good in groups in Space to Create courses (scores out of 5). 83 responses

### Blob Tree evaluation of group work

**75%**

increase in children identifying as helping others or grouped with friends

We used the Blob Tree (Wilson & Long, 2005), right, as an additional evaluation tool to assess how children feel in themselves or around others, by asking them to select the blob figure that most represents how they felt at the start and end of the course (see Appendix 7). We retrospectively categorised and coloured the blob figures as outlined in Table 9 and Figure 23.

73 children participating in Space to Create completed both before and after Blob Trees. There was a 22% increase in children identifying with blob figures that feel confident and happy and a 75% increase in children identifying as helping others or grouped with friends, with a 43% reduction in children identifying as feeling isolated or upset.



Figure 23 - Blob Tree evaluation and categories

Summary	Count at start	Count at end	Change	% change
Confident and happy	35	42	7	22%
Helping others or grouped with friends	8	14	6	75%
Isolated or upset	30	17	-13	-43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>		

Table 9 - Blob Tree results (Space to Create)

### 5.5.6 Any unintended outcomes or consequences

#### Arts Award

96

Children participating in Space to Create achieved a Discover Arts Award.

Although it is not an intended outcome of Space to Create, 96 children achieved a Discover Arts Award after engaging in new creative activities across the weeks and sharing their results with others.

### 5.5.7 Conclusions, how change was achieved and Space to Create's contribution to change

There is some evidence that Space to Create has had a positive difference in children participating. **Participants enjoyed the course and felt supported and valued by facilitators who set the environment for children to feel at ease, develop new creative skills and express themselves through the arts, feel more confident, good about themselves and good in groups.**

#### How creativity contributed to change

All participants engaged in creative activities over the 8-week course, including printing, painting, drawing, sewing, modelling and storytelling. More than half of children (53%) reported feeling more creative after Space to Create and almost all (96%) were observed as developing new creative skills. Facilitator observations show that the course allowed children to express themselves creatively and share their results with others, which led to many achieving a Discover Arts Award.

**Creative activities were important contributions to the observed change, by giving space for children to express ideas and themselves in new ways.** Participants felt free to experiment, make mistakes, and try new things without fear of judgment. Close listening to music and working together fostered friendship and teamwork skills.

#### Creating an environment for children to express themselves, build confidence and self-esteem and feel good in groups

**Facilitators created a supportive and caring atmosphere through praise, guidance, and validation.** They listened carefully to the participants, gave them prompts and positive affirmations, and allowed children to express themselves and share their work with the group. This played an important contribution in helping participants to grow in confidence and self-esteem. 54% of children reported feeling more confident after Space to Create (although qualitative facilitator observations note that most children built their confidence in different ways) and 52% reported an increase in self-esteem.

*“You've really helped me, and I've enjoyed it so much.”*

SPACE TO CREATE PARTICIPANT

**Participants bonded, made new friendships and shared a healthy dynamic that facilitators thought was inclusive and caring.** Facilitators thought that all children benefitted from being part of the group, even if a few of them sometimes found this challenging due to feeling overwhelmed or shyness. The group activities and discussion played an important contribution to 51% of children reporting an increase in feeling good in groups and 75% increase in children identifying as helping others or grouped with friends.

There are some recommended changes to programme design and reflective practice in creative practitioners that may help more young people feel supported and valued, and potentially, an increase in outcomes.

### Recommendations for future evaluation

1. The Observations Sheet should be simplified and strengthened, to incorporate a holistic assessment of children and young people's progress over the programme (see section 3.4.10).
2. Evaluation tools may need more explaining to children – e.g., to colour just one section of the Outcomes Wheel and to base feelings (on the Outcomes Wheel and Blob Tree) 'on the last couple of weeks', rather than in that moment specifically. However, it is acknowledged that children's responses are more likely than other groups to be influenced by how they are feeling in the moment.



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- Schools participating in Telling Your Story: Bexhill Academy, Hastings Academy, St. Leonard's Academy and Priory School.
- Schools participating in Space to Create: All Saints C of E School, Chantry Community Primary School, Little Common Primary School, Robsack Wood Primary Academy, Hollington Primary Academy and Sacred Heart RC Primary School.
- Funders of Discovery College arts courses, Telling Your Story and Space to Create: Arts Council England, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, BBC Children in Need, East Sussex County Council, National Lottery Community Fund, The Redhill Trust, and Hastings Opportunity Area

### Disclaimer

The authors have made every reasonable effort to provide information and data that is accurate. However, the information has been compiled from a variety of sources and there may be errors or omissions. Insley Consulting cannot accept responsibility for loss to any person or organisation acting, or refraining from acting, on the content and recommendations contained herein.



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## 8. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – List of courses evaluated

#### **Discovery Arts**

2020 - Autumn Designing Together (web)  
2020 - Autumn DisCo PhotoClub  
2021 - Autumn Creative Writing  
2021 - Autumn Music Speaks  
2021 - Autumn DisCo Photoclub  
2021 - Autumn Street Art  
2021 - Spring Automata  
2021 - Spring Music Speaks  
2021 - Summer Music Speaks  
2022 - Spring Music Speaks  
2022 - Spring Street Art  
2022 - Spring Tech Tasters  
2022 - Summer Disco PhotoClub  
2022 - Summer Music Speaks  
2022 - Summer Nature Space  
2022 - Digital Storymakers  
2022 - Autumn Discovering Our Best Selves  
2022 - Autumn Power of Voice

#### **Telling Your Story**

2021 - Summer - Hastings Academy  
2021 - Spring Summer - Bexhill Academy  
2022 - Autumn - Bexhill Academy  
2022 - Spring - Bexhill Academy  
2022 - Spring - Hastings Academy  
2022 - Summer - Priors  
2022 - Summer St. Leonard's Academy

#### **Space to Create**



2020 - All Saints - Yr 5  
2020 - Robsack Wood Yr 5 and 6  
2021 - Autumn - All Saints Yr 5  
2021 - Autumn - Robsack Wood Primary Yr 5  
2021 - Summer - All Saints Yr 4  
2021 - Summer - Chantry Yr 5  
2022 - Autumn - All Saints Yr 5  
2022 - Autumn - Robsack Wood Yr 5  
2022 – Spring – Hollington Primary Yr 5  
2022 - Spring - Little Common Primary Yr 5  
2022 – Summer – Sacred Heart Yr 4, Yr 5  
2022 – Summer – Chantry Yr 5

## Appendix 2 - Evaluation framework

Outcome (change you want to make)	Indicators (that outcome is happening)	Information collection method / measure
1. Young people experience increased subjective mental and emotional wellbeing.	YP's average wellbeing score at the beginning and end of the programme, and average increase.	Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)
	Number of YP whose wellbeing score has increased by more than 2 points.	
2. Young people are less socially isolated and feel more connected with their peers	Number of YP who are observed as working as part of a group	Practitioner/trainer observation
	Number of YP who feel connected to others	Outcomes wheel in journal
	Number of YP who feel that the course helped them to get on and work with other people.	Open question in YP survey
3. Young people have increased creative skills and see these as part of their wider wellbeing	Number of YP who develop or learn new creative skills	Practitioner/trainer observation
	Creative skills learnt or developed	Journal and survey
	Number of YP who work as part of a team to contribute to creation of group artwork	MH practitioner observation
	Number of YP who believe that 'being creative helps me to feel good'	Outcomes wheel in journal
	YP see creativity as helpful to their wellbeing	Interviews and qualitative responses in survey
4. Young people have increased skills at expressing and managing their mental health and feelings	Number of YP who feel more comfortable being true their self	Outcomes wheel in journal
	Number of YP who feel supported and valued	YP Survey; interviews
	Number of YP who express feelings in positive ways within sessions	Practitioner/trainer observation; YP interviews
	Number of YP who feel that the course helped them to manage their thoughts and feelings	YP survey
5. Young people are more resilient	Number of YP who are open to new ideas and try new things	Practitioner/trainer observation
	How YP are better able to manage their mental health	SWEMWBS; journal; interviews; observations
	Number of YP who feel that they have a sense of purpose	SWEMWBS - more optimistic

Outcome (change you want to make)	Indicators (that outcome is happening)	Information collection method / measure
		ONS - Doing things that are worthwhile
	Number of YP who feel confident	Outcomes wheel in journal
6. Improved learning/practice of artists, arts organisations and mental health workers involved in the programme	Skills gained by artists, arts organisations and mental health workers through the programme (including co-production)	Focus Group; observation form
	Knowledge gained by of artists, arts organisations and mental health workers through the programme	Focus Group; observation form
7. Young people achieve the goal that they set for themselves	Number of YP who achieve the goal that they set for themselves	Journal

## Tell us what you think!

	I have read / heard and understand the information about the research.	<input type="radio"/>
	I agree to take part in the research.	<input type="radio"/>

Thanks - your responses will really help us!

## You and your course

Course: \_\_\_\_\_ End date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Your thoughts and feelings

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS)

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## Your personal wellbeing

Below are three questions about your feelings on aspects of your life. There are no right or wrong answers. For each of these questions please give an answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".

	Not at all										Completely	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?												
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?												
Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?												

Has anything else happened (outside of the Discovery Arts course) that has contributed to the way you have been feeling recently?

## Feedback and difference made

Did you feel supported and valued through the course?

- Strongly agree     
  Somewhat agree     
  Neither agree nor disagree     
  Somewhat disagree     
  Strongly disagree

Did this course help you to get on with and work with other people? If so, how?	
Did the course help you to be more creative? If so, how?	
Did this course help you to express your thoughts and feelings? If so, how?	
What was good about the course?	
How could we make it better?	

	Not at all likely										Extremely likely	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
How likely is it that you would recommend the course to a friend?												

That's it. Thank you for your time and feedback.

## Appendix 4 – Interview questions

### For parents/carers

1. How well was the course managed from your perspective?
  - Did you get the communications you need?
  - Did we put your child at ease?
  - What did you think of the length of the course? (Around 8 weeks)
2. Can you tell me a bit about what life was like for [child name] before the course?
3. What were the biggest benefits of the course for your child? *Explore...*
  - Being able to work in a group, forming new friendships, being less isolated
  - More confident showing creativity, new ways of managing mental health through creativity
  - Being able to deal with problems better, express feelings, bounce-back when things go wrong
  - Confidence, self-esteem, positive outlook
4. Do you think [child name] has put any creative skills learnt through the course into practice?
  - Creative skills learnt. Shared with others? Used outside of the course?
  - How to use creativity to support their mental health?
5. Has your child gone on to do any other creative or mental wellbeing courses or activities, either through Discovery College or elsewhere?
  - [If so] Do you think that attending more than one course helped to contribute to the changes you spoke about earlier?
6. Do you think you would have seen those changes without Discovery Arts?
  - What would life have been like for [child name] without Discovery Arts?
7. Can you think of anything we could do to improve the course?

### Interview questions for young people

1. What did you think of the course?
  - Having mental health practitioners, creative people and peers delivering the course?
  - Do you think the course was designed with young people in mind?
  - Do you think you got an opportunity to contribute to the course design?
  - What did you think of the length of the course? (Around 8 weeks)
2. Can you tell me a bit about what life was like for you before the DisCo Arts course?
3. What did you learn through the course?
  - Any new creative skills? Shared with others? Used outside of the course?
  - How to use creativity to support your mental health?
4. Were there any other benefits to you?
  - Being able to work in a group, make new friends, feel less isolated
  - More confident in showing creativity, new ways of managing MH through creativity
  - Being able to deal with problems better, bounce-back when things go wrong
  - Confidence, self-esteem, positive outlook
5. Did you go on to do any other creative or mental wellbeing courses or activities either through Discovery College or elsewhere?
  - [If so] Do you think that attending more than one course helped to contribute to the changes you spoke about earlier?
6. Do you think you would have seen those changes without Discovery Arts course?
  - What would life have been like without the Discovery Arts course?
7. Can you think of anything we could do to improve the course?



## Appendix 5 – Focus Group questions

### Mental health practitioners

1. How well planned do you think your respective courses were?
  - Do you think that everyone was clear in their roles and responsibilities?
  - Do you think that everyone was clear on the purpose of the session?
2. What were the differences in YP's engagement in the course between online and in-person delivery?
3. In the first year, the emphasis on sessions was almost exclusively on creativity rather than mental health. Did this change much in year two? Do you think that was the right balance?
4. How helpful (or not) were the evaluation tools? (before and after survey, journal, observation form)
5. Have noted and been told of significant changes in the YP I have spoken to who have gone on to be part of Download, Expert by Experience and Peer Mentors. Do you have any stories of significant improvements in confidence or well-being in people who have just participated in one or more courses?
6. How do you see Discovery College arts courses in the eco-system of support that is available for YP with mental health problems? Does it have a unique place?
7. Do you think that YP need to participate in Disco Arts for a longer period of time for change to happen?
8. What are the key improvements that need to be made to the programme or individual courses, going forward, from your perspective?

### Creative practitioners

1. How do you think young people engaged with the creative aspects of the course?
2. What do you think young people learnt through the course?
  - Creative skills learnt (give examples)
  - Did you notice any young people developing any new skills in managing their mental health and resilience (give examples).
3. What changes did you observe in young people participating?
4. How confident are you that learning will be carried on after the course?
5. What was the value of including peer mentors (other young people)?
  - Did this make a difference to young people's experience of the programme?
  - Did this make a difference to your experience of the programme?
6. How helpful (or not) were the evaluation tools?
7. What was good about the course?
8. Anything to improve on for next time?

# Appendix 6 – Distance Travelled Wheel for Space to Create

**Space to Create** Date of birth ..... Initials .....

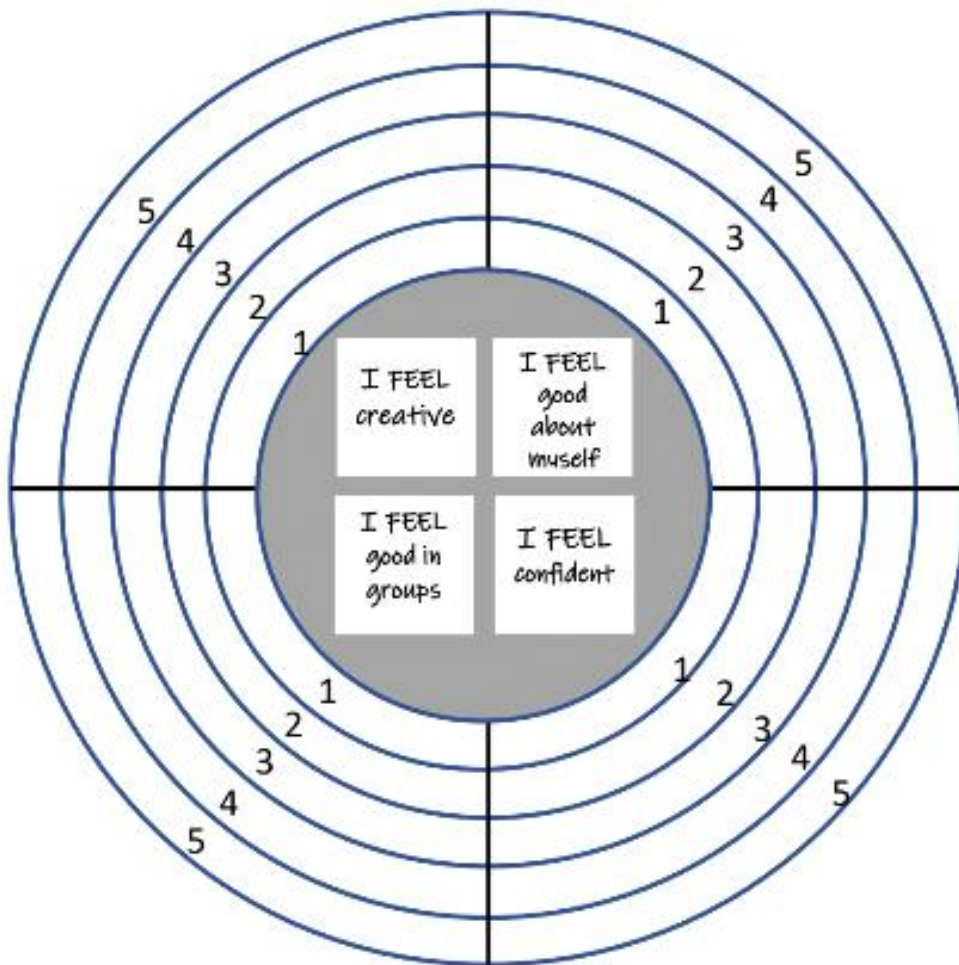
**Space to Create is a creative group to help you**

**Be creative and try new things**

**Feel good about yourself**

**Be more confident (be brave, try new things, speak out)**

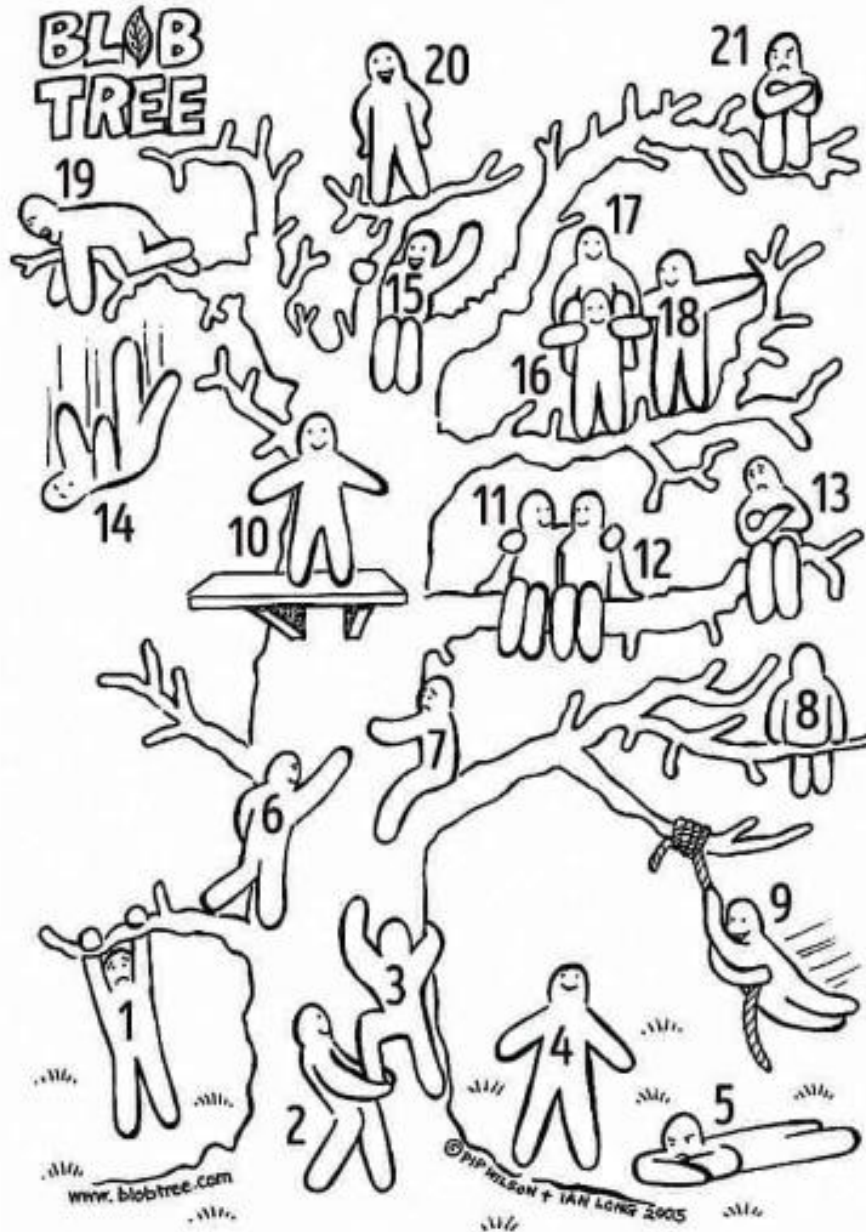
This is to help us to understand what difference was made through the programme. We'll fill it in at the start and end. Shade in the 4 areas of the target below to show how much you agree with each statement where 1 is low and 5 is high.



Colour at start

Colour at end

Date of Birth:	Initials:
----------------	-----------



**Beginning colour used:**

Which blob figure connects with how you are feeling? Colour it in. What's the blob figure saying?

**End colour used:**






Which blob figure connects with how you are feeling? Colour it in. What's the blob figure saying?

Appendix 8 – Feedback form for Space to Create

Tell us what you think! Space to Create

Your date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Your initials: \_\_\_\_\_  
(first letter of your first name and last name)

				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

I have enjoyed Space to Create					
I feel supported and valued through Space to Create					

What I learnt about how to talk about my feelings	
What I enjoyed most about the course.	
How it could be better.	

	Not at all likely						Extremely likely				
I would recommend Space to Create to a friend.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

That's it. Thank you for your time and feedback, which will be used to develop and improve the service.