Everyday Creativity Programme Evaluation report

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Foreword– by Nick Ewbank, Nick Ewbank Associates

"Without firm government intervention, the interrelated systems that make up society will often act to exacerbate existing inequalities and increase the risks to those who are most vulnerable (1)*."* Prof James Wilson

The positioning of public health services within local authorities acknowledges both the complex social and economic factors that drive health inequalities, and the significance of people's behaviours in determining outcomes. As Professor Sir Michael Marmot points out, in order to move towards a fairer and healthier society it is important to enable all people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives, and to create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities. But bringing about the kinds of behaviour change needed in order to address health inequalities is not straightforward and requires innovative and responsive approaches. Departmental and disciplinary silos are among a range of the inhibitory factors, and if there is to be a genuine shift to wellbeing driven policy, with parity for mental health, a joined-up, partnership approach to tackling what Marmot refers to as the 'causes of the causes' (2) is required.

Despite evidence of correlation between participation in positive creative activities and improved health outcomes (3), there remains a tendency in the UK for engagement in mainstream arts and culture to be the preserve of a relatively privileged and educated minority (4). Recent research has demonstrated how exclusion from established and formalised modes of creativity begins at an early age, with people from working class backgrounds, women and people of colour systematically excluded from cultural institutions and the creative industries (5).

Human creativity has been characterised as exploratory, involving processes of taking something already existing and extending its limits to create new forms of ideas or objects which have material value within the market (6). However, Dr Margaret Mead's early work on leisure and creativity (7) illustrates how ideas of exceptionalism related to perceived notions of quality and "genius" tend to overlook widespread experiences of freshness, newness or strangeness that can be encountered in many active everyday forms of leisure and creativity such as cooking, "dressing" of self and home, and connecting to nature (8). Such understandings typically run counter to notions of the market as the primary arbiter of value.

Recognition of these forms of exclusion has led to increasing calls for a more inclusive understanding of creativity. The blurring of boundaries between leisure, work and consumption, and the recognition of complex home-based experiences as a result of the pandemic have helped to open a space for the exploration of Everyday Creativity as a way of making sense of the world, connecting to others and affording new meaning to life (9).

Indeed, creativity has long been seen as a means to "illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world" (10). This two-step process of self-reflection and psychological bonding with others underpins the concept of mentalisation, which is seen as essential for

healthy child development, emotional regulation and the development of empathetic relationships. All these factors can combine to support individuals to function better in stronger, more resilient communities.

From a local authority perspective, intervening upstream by operationalising Everyday Creativity can effectively enact the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) priority outcomes of keeping vulnerable people safe and helping people help themselves.

Everyday Creativity in Care: Zoom Meeting and delivery of resource boxes

Contents

Background and context

The Everyday Creativity programme was the first systematic attempt within the Public Health team at ESCC to explore the potential health benefits of creativity for its population. This report describes and evaluates seven unique projects across five populations considered to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures to control spread of the disease and reduce deaths required unprecedented changes in the way that people in England live, work, play and interact with each other. As a result of lockdown, self-isolation and social distancing people living alone were isolated from any direct contact with other people, and those living with others had limited options to avoid conflict or abuse if it arose.

Creative activities can play several important roles in individual and community life through providing: a psychological escape from immediate pressures; a safe way of expressing emotions; a way of processing and making sense of the world; a way of connecting with others as well as providing pleasure.

During lockdown many people have become more creative at home, from NHS rainbows to online choirs, from learning a musical instrument or joining an online dance class, and it is likely that participating in everyday creative activities has boosted individual resilience and lessened the impact of the enforced changes in the way we live. However, part of what forms a sense of self, and of community are shared cultural experiences. While virtual communities and experiences have grown during lockdown, and reduced social isolation, for many people they are a poor substitute for face-to-face interaction.

There is a growing body of evidence that participating in creative activities can improve wellbeing, reduce loneliness, and reduce social isolation (11). The Public Health team wished to explore the impact of participating in creative activities on health and wellbeing as a way of supporting our population during the pandemic. Following East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Corporate Management Team (CMT) approval of the one-off use of £125,000 of the Public Health grant in 2020/21 to support this, the Everyday Creativity programme was developed during the autumn and winter of 2020.

About the Everyday Creativity Programme

In November 2020, ESCC commissioned Culture Shift to manage the Everyday Creativity programme.

The aims of the programme were to:

- Implement creative activity-based interventions aiming to improve mental health and wellbeing for five discrete populations selected by the Public Health team based on risk of adverse outcomes during the pandemic

- Build on creative activities that the local population has used to manage their mental health and wellbeing during lockdown

- Share the learning and any relevant supporting materials to support a wider range of the local population to utilise creative activities to support their health and wellbeing through further COVID-restrictions beyond winter and early spring 2020/21

- Produce a bank of resources based on the interventions to enable a wider population to benefit

- Effectively evaluate each intervention to contribute to the growing evidence base on the opportunity of the arts to improve health and wellbeing.

The Public health team identified five population groups who were determined to be at high risk of adverse outcomes either before or during the pandemic:

- People living in care homes
- Personal Assistants (PAs)
- Young people
- Service users of the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)
- People who have been furloughed, recently made redundant or are unemployed

Working with the creative sector to improve health and wellbeing was a new venture for Public Health at ESCC. It was agreed that the approach for this programme would be collaborative, to facilitate cross sectoral learning. As such, a Public Health Consultant worked closely with Culture Shift in terms of overall programme management, and each of the five population groups was seen as a separate project with a named Public Health Consultant lead working alongside one of the co-directors of Culture Shift.

Culture Shift and Public Health appointed seven providers to deliver projects across the five population groups, with two providers being appointed for the care home residents and RSI cohorts. Each provider was asked to work with members of the population group, or staff who work closely with the group, to co-design the projects and types of activities that would be delivered.   The table below shows the delivery dates for the projects – the periods when the creative organisations were actively working with each group.

About the Programme

Everyday Creativity Programme: dates and creative partners

Project name / group	Start	End
LUMA - Young People Project Arts Partners: Eggtooth, Home Live Art and Isolation Station Facilitators: Katie Baird, Sophia Bolton, Dan Matthews, and the Nova Twins	March 2021	July 2021
Pottery and Visual Arts – ex-Rough Sleeper Art Project Arts Partner: Eastbourne Studio Pottery Facilitators: Lucy Cobb, Elizabeth Doak and Claire Shoosmith	April 2021	August 2021
Resonate – ex-Rough Sleeper Music Project Arts Partner: Resonate CIC Facilitators: Sam Dook, Marina Perryman, and Hayley Savage	April 2021	July 2021
Everyday Creativity in Care - Care Home Art Project Arts Partner and Facilitators: Sarah Bryant, Marisa Gardner, and Lucy Groenewoud	March 2021	June 2021
Raise Your Voice in Care - Care Home Music Project Arts Partner: Raise Your Voice Facilitators: Jane Haughton and Nancy Cooley	March 2021	July 2021
PA Project Arts Partner: Community 21 at Brighton University Facilitators: Nick Gant and Emma Friedlander Collins	March 2021	June 2021
RESTORE - Unemployed and Furlough Project Arts Partner: Creative Future Facilitators: Dan Bloomfield, Dominique De-Light, Tara Gould, and Lizzie Rideout	March 2021	June 2021

Evaluation Methodology

As with the delivery of the programme, the approach to the evaluation was collaborative, with the Public Health team leading this but working closely with Culture Shift in the design, collection, and analysis phase. The evaluation was designed based on the RE-AIM framework (12). Not all aspects of RE-AIM were relevant in the context of the Everyday Creativity programme. The intended use of RE-AIM is outlined below:

- **Reach**- the number of people engaged in each project, the representativeness of participants compared to the cohort they are drawn from and attendance/attrition (where appropriate).

- **Effectiveness**- the primary outcome will be the percentage of participants with a meaningful baseline to post project improvement in their mental health and wellbeing scores. Secondary outcomes relate to increased participation in everyday creative activities and before/after activity wellbeing umbrella scores. Qualitative data collection from focus groups and interviews with participants were also planned to give meaning to quantitative data around why an intervention was or was not effective, and to understand the experience of participants.

- **Adoption**- this is the absolute number, proportion and representativeness of settings willing to initiate a program. As these are pilot projects, involving a small number of very different settings, this will not be explored.

- **Implementation**- As all projects in this programme are different, this will focus on a description of each project and participant feedback regarding their experience of taking part.

- **Maintenance**- this relates to the wider impact of the programme and opportunities for collaborative work between public health and the creative sector in the future and is also outside of the scope of this evaluation of the pilot.

The various different items/metrics we agreed to gather with Culture Shift for each project are outlined in table one alongside the anticipated source of this information:

Table One: Evaluation items and data sources

	Item	Source
Reach	**Number of people directly engaged in the project**	Engagement log
	Number of people who completed the project (if applicable)	Engagement log
	Demographics of participants	Starter survey
Effectiveness	**Improvement in mental health and wellbeing scores (longitudinal)**	Starter survey and end of project survey
	Improvement in wellbeing scores (pre/post activity)	Pre and post activity wellbeing umbrellas or CWS (Care home projects only)
	Increased participation in EC activities	Starter survey and end of project survey
	Any wider impacts from the project e.g., new skills	End of project survey
Adoption	**N/A**	N/A- pilot program so not clear as to what wider adoption of interventions would be
Implementation	**Brief description of project**	End of project review meeting notes or via email confirmation
	Experience of the project	End of project survey Post project qualitative focus groups/interviews
Maintenance	**Number of people indirectly engaged with the project**	Engagement log
	Plans for legacy of project	End of project review meeting notes Reflective session output

Main data sources

Starter and end of Project Surveys

The starter survey aimed to capture the demographics participants and baseline participation in creative activities. Additionally, within the starter survey, we aimed to collect baseline data on mental health and wellbeing and to collect this data again in the end of project survey to ascertain any improvement in wellbeing over the course of the project. As recommended by the New Economics Foundation (13) we included the following measures of wellbeing:

- The Short Warwick- Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) (14);

-   The Office for National Statistics (ONS) subjective wellbeing questions.
-   A question on social trust, which is known to be a key factor for wellbeing.

Across these tools, key specific elements of wellbeing were included such as connection to others, life satisfaction and resilience.

A shortened version of the end of project survey focusing on the experience of being involved was developed for those involved in the ex-rough sleeper projects, as it was recognised during the project that it was unrealistic to ask this cohort to complete the full survey.

Positive wellbeing umbrellas
In addition to assessing any longitudinal change in mental health and wellbeing over the course of the project via the starter and finisher surveys, we were interested in any changes before and immediately after a particular activity. To assess these in the majority of projects we aimed to use the positive wellbeing umbrellas developed by University College London based on the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) scales (15). These had been developed and validated when evaluating the impact of cultural interventions on mental health and wellbeing (15).

Canterbury Wellbeing Scale
Both care home projects felt that the wellbeing umbrella tool was inappropriate for their cohort due to the high number of residents with dementia. They proposed instead that they use the Canterbury Wellbeing Scale (CWS) as an alternative to the starter and end survey and to monitor pre and post activity improvements in mood. This simple scale has been developed for and validated for measuring subjective wellbeing in people with mild to moderate dementia and their carers (16). It was therefore agreed that this tool would be used instead of the wellbeing umbrellas for the Everyday Creativity in Care and Raise Your Voice in care projects.

Qualitative evaluation
Gathering qualitative evaluation was vital in order to complement the quantitative data in terms of giving meaning as to how or why an intervention was or was not effective, and to understand the experience of participants.

Latimer Appleby, a Market Research Consultancy, in association with the Research Consultant Jenny Harvey, were commissioned to undertake several focus groups and depth interviews to support the qualitative evaluation of each project. These were completed between June and August 2021. A report with the analysis from these focus groups and interviews was provided and is referred to regularly throughout this report.

Additionally, each project was encouraged to submit any materials that supported the qualitative evaluation of their project, where participants provided explicit consent to this.

Interim and End of Project review meeting minutes
Every project held an interim project meeting to hear about progress, understand challenges and agree any changes to the initial plans, and an end of project review meeting to consider the outcomes of the project, the challenges, and the potential legacy of the

project. These meetings included Culture Shift, Public Health, the project leads and other key stakeholders.

Evaluation limitations

There were several challenges to this evaluation.

Firstly, whilst we wanted to evaluate the projects in a consistent way across the programme, each individual project was targeting a different group and delivering very different activities in different ways, alongside varying levels of experience between project leads. It was challenging to find appropriate evaluation tools and methods for all projects. Where project leads highlighted an issue or anticipated difficulty in collecting data in the proposed way, we aimed to work together to adapt the evaluation methodology for that cohort to increase the likelihood of receiving sufficient data. In some projects, such as the Everyday Creativity in Care project, this process worked well and the tool used (CWS) met the needs of the project leads, the Public Health team and importantly was acceptable to residents and care home staff. However, for other projects that also may have benefited from a more tailored approach, this process didn't work effectively or early enough in the project (e.g., during the design phase) and therefore quantitative data collected was limited.

There is a view from some academics working in the arts and health field that it is not necessarily appropriate to measure the health and wellbeing benefits of creative activities using the quantitative tools that we selected. Although, the quantitative tools selected here have been used successfully in other creativity-based interventions elsewhere where these were face to face interventions. The feedback from the programme manager and project leads was that the delivery of the interventions (largely) online was a significant barrier to the use of these tools. This resulted in very low uptake of the tools and thus limited quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of each project. The starter and end of project surveys have only been utilised when evaluating the young person project, and only partially due to an insufficient sample size for some questions. The wellbeing umbrella tools were only available in paper format rather than an interactive web version, and most projects found them difficult to incorporate into their work. Therefore, they were only utilised in a limited way within the PA project and with Eastbourne Studio Pottery project. Finally, the CWS tool was well utilised in the Everyday Creativity in Care (ECC) but was not utilised in the Raise Your Voice in Care (RYV) project.

The result of this was that for most projects there was very little quantitative data to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. The qualitative data gathered from focus groups, interviews and post project review meetings have therefore been utilised in this evaluation in a way beyond their original purpose: to evaluate if participants felt that there had been an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing from taking part. It is not possible to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the interventions for a wider population based on this data due to the nature of the data and the very small and self-selected samples.

The lack of starter surveys for most projects also meant that we did not capture the demographics of participants, so we were unable to assess whether the project was disproportionately benefiting certain groups over others as part of the reach of the project.

Following an end of programme reflective session, the challenges of the evaluation were considered in greater detail and a reflection on these is provided by Nick Ewbank on page 58.

Glossary

- **AC-** Activity Coordinator
- **CWS-** Canterbury Wellbeing Scale
- **CMT-** Corporate Management Team
- **ESCC-** East Sussex County Council
- **ESP-** Eastbourne Studio Pottery
- **ESPAN-** East Sussex Personal Assistant Network
- **ECC-** Everyday Creativity in Care
- **KPI-** Key performance indicator
- **ONS-** Office for National Statistics
- **PAs-** Personal Assistants
- **PANAS-** Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
- **RE-AIM-** Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance
- **RSI-** Rough Sleeper Initiative
- **RYV-** Raise Your Voice in Care
- **SWEMBWS-** Short Warwick- Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

Young People: LUMA

About the project

This project set out to explore how online content could have positive benefits to young people's wellbeing and mental health through both producing the content and also as viewers of the content. The project was led by a partnership of three Hastings based organisations; Eggtooth, Isolation Station, and Home Live Art.

An initial period of consultation saw the team reach out to groups of young people across East Sussex that were already meeting online and joining them in the online space to explore what they would want from a social media channel. Feedback at this stage was that the channel should promote positivity, learning and inclusion and that mental health was a key issue for young people.

From this process, a core group of young people were formed and met regularly online, supported by industry leading creative professionals and social activists, to develop the channel- LUMA- and create content.

Throughout the project young people worked in groups and independently on video, photographic, scripted, and graphic text storytelling, with coaching and support in design, shooting, editing, writing, social media storytelling and creating & maintaining a brand. Working online was challenging for young people, and the opportunities to meet face-face towards the end of the project were key to the creating the film content.

The channel that has been created, and associated content, can be viewed via the link below: https://www.instagram.com/luma_en/

The sources of data used to evaluate this project included:

-   Engagement log.
-   Starter and end of project survey responses from 12 young people.
-   Focus group report conducted and analysed by Latimer Appleby Ltd.
-   Final project review meeting minutes.

-   Filmed interviews with participants conducted by the project lead.

Reach

90 Young People were consulted when designing the project. These came from a range of groups including the Children in Care Council, Hastings Youth Council, Eggtooth's service users and LGBTQ+ young people who are supported by the Allsorts Youth project.

In total, 54 young people took part in the project. There were 23 direct participants, of whom 18 (78%) stayed with the project for its duration and completed creative projects. There were also 31 participants who took part in a shorter second phase of the project, over three days. Originally, the project was asked to directly engage with 100 participants, some as content developers and others reached through the platform and invited to submit new content. However, this proved too ambitious within the timeframe but remains an ambition for the channel and the next stage of this work.

Others involved in the project included 15 adult mentors and 32 other adults who were involved with filming and other forms of support.

Of the project participants, 17 completed both the online starter and end of project survey, but only 12 responses could be accurately matched due to issues with the respondents inputting their unique identifying code.

The demographics of the survey respondents (12 in total) are listed below:

-   50% were male, 33% were female and 17% preferred not to say.
-   8% identified as trans.
-   All respondents were aged between 16 and 18.
-   All respondents identified as White British.
-   58% had a disability.
-   33% identified as straight, 17% identified as bisexual, 8% identified as gay, 8% identified with another sexuality and 33% preferred not to state their sexuality.

Three participants and one of the project leads took part in a focus group as part of the qualitative evaluation.

Effectiveness

Impact on wellbeing

We intended to measure wellbeing in several ways, as mentioned in the methodology section of this report.

The majority of survey respondents felt that taking part in creative activities has some role in improving or maintaining wellbeing, as outlined below:

Figure A: The role of creativity in improving or maintaining wellbeing
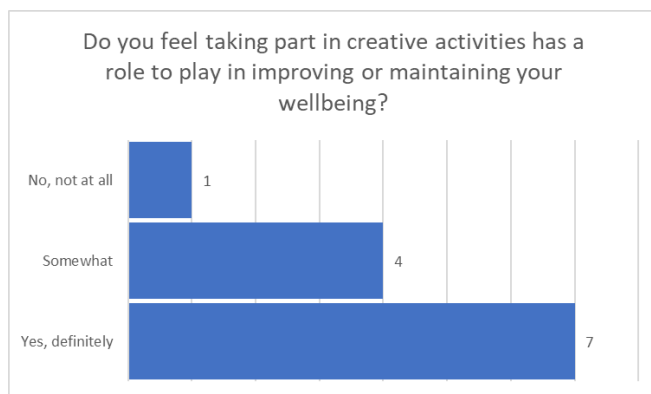
Additionally, when survey respondents were directly asked whether they had noticed any improvements to their wellbeing at the end of the project, 50% responded that they had noticed an improvement.

A second method of measuring whether there had been an improvement in personal wellbeing was through asking the ONS personal wellbeing questions which relate to life satisfaction, whether life feels worthwhile and happiness levels, during the starter and end of project surveys. Based on these measures, no improvement in personal wellbeing was demonstrated over the duration of this project. However, it should be noted that some of the starter surveys were completed mid-way through the project, rather than at the start of the project as intended, and so this may not accurately reflect how the project has impacted wellbeing over time. It may be that not seeing a deterioration in mental health is a positive outcome, given that this took place during COVID-19. Although, it is not possible to assess this, as we did not have a control group to compare this outcome in.

Unfortunately, the number of respondents was too low to measure wellbeing via the SWEMWBS.

However, qualitative feedback from the focus group, interviews with young people captured on film and the end of project review meeting minutes provide some insights into the participant's subjective view of the impact on their wellbeing. One focus group participant highlighted the impact one aspect of the project had on them:

"I woke up that day feeling down and then we had this dancing therapy and there was something about it that helped me to release all this negative energy and tension. It helped

me feel more welcome, more at home, at peace and safe. I got to experience this and not just as one of the workers."

Participant, Focus Group (17)

One young person that took part in an interview outlined that he had seen an improvement in his mental health from taking part, especially when the work was able to happen in person rather than online:

"It's been very beneficial… it definitely helps me with my mental health…especially now since we've been …allowed to do this sort of stuff in person, it helps me a lot more…It's a lot more positive and beneficial when we are with each other."

Participant, Interview (17)

In terms of what motivated these young people to take part in the project, one focus group respondent expressed that their primary motive for taking part in the project was to help promote good mental health in others:

"The ideas that I have put forward have been quite mental health oriented, ways to improve it, how we can get other people to open up about their mental health…"

Participant, Focus Group (17)

One participant expressed the importance of the work and the content in normalizing the conversation around mental health to reduce stigma around this topic:

"It's just about normalising talking about these kinds of issues and starting the conversations and (as) soon as everyone is comfortable talking about it, it becomes less of an unspoken thing we know we have to address."

Participant, Interview (17)

One respondent expressed that his own experience growing up with mental health issues motivated him to take part in the project:

"There are so many different problems that I see in this day and age, just walking through this town, or things I overthink about, so many things that need a positive outcome / an improvement. I haven't come from a good background; I don't want to see people go through that sort of pain and not be able to help them. And if they do go through that sort of pain, I want to be able to help them improve on ways that they can help themselves without having to turn to things like drinking, drugs, smoking and other things to let loose."

Participant, Focus Group (17)

Further to this, one focus group participant wanted to make content as a response to some of the less positive content available on social media:

"I liked the idea of working with lots of people and being able to create the content that we want to see on Instagram. I know for myself, that I go on Instagram, and I leave feeling deflated, because you just find yourself in a hole, constantly scrolling. I jumped on the idea of this, because I really liked that I could have a say on the new type of content we could put out."

Participant, Focus Group (17)

In the project's final review meeting, the facilitators reported they had noticed the project's impact on wellbeing, both from the zoom sessions and the face-to-face sessions. In fact, one facilitator noted that young people simply sharing what was going on for them took up most of the zoom time, and it functioned almost like a therapy session. Additionally, the facilitators felt that providing an opportunity for young people to meet each other and collaborate has been a way of improving wellbeing and reducing isolation in this group. One facilitator reflected that: "What was really important was when people were together in the `real world', people came out of their shells. It is clear young people have struggled with mental health and lack of social interaction. This was particularly noticeable for the students from Dv8 who took part in the three-day project where tutors commented on the opportunities for collaboration and laughter."

Project lead, End of project review meeting

Impact on participation in creative activities

When asked if COVID-19 had impacted on the amount of time participants had spent taking part in creative activities, over half of survey respondents stated they had spent somewhat more or a lot more time being creative during the pandemic. One quarter of respondents, however, stated they spent somewhat less time being creative during COVID-19, which was largely attributed to not being able to attend organised activities. At the start of the project, we were also interested in the barriers to participating in creative activities. There were a wide range of barriers noted by respondents, with the top barrier listed being confidence or skills (58% of respondents noted this.) At the end of the project, this was still noted as the top barrier, but by slightly fewer respondents (50%.)

At the time of completing the starter survey, 8% of respondents participated in creative activities 1-2 hours per week, 8% participated in such activities 2-4 hours per week, 42% of respondents participated in creative activities 4-6 hours per week, 17% reported doing 6-8 hours per week with 25% reporting undertaking 8 or more hours per week of creative activities. The activities undertaken were varied and are outlined in figure B:

Figure B: Types of creative activities undertaken by participants

Types of activities undertaken by respondents

Type of activity	No. of respondents
Cooking	4
Crafts	1
Creative writing/journalling	6
Dance	1
Digital arts/video gaming	7
Drama	1
Drawing /painting	4
Gardening	1
Making/playing music	4
Media Production	4
Photography	6
Watching videos	1
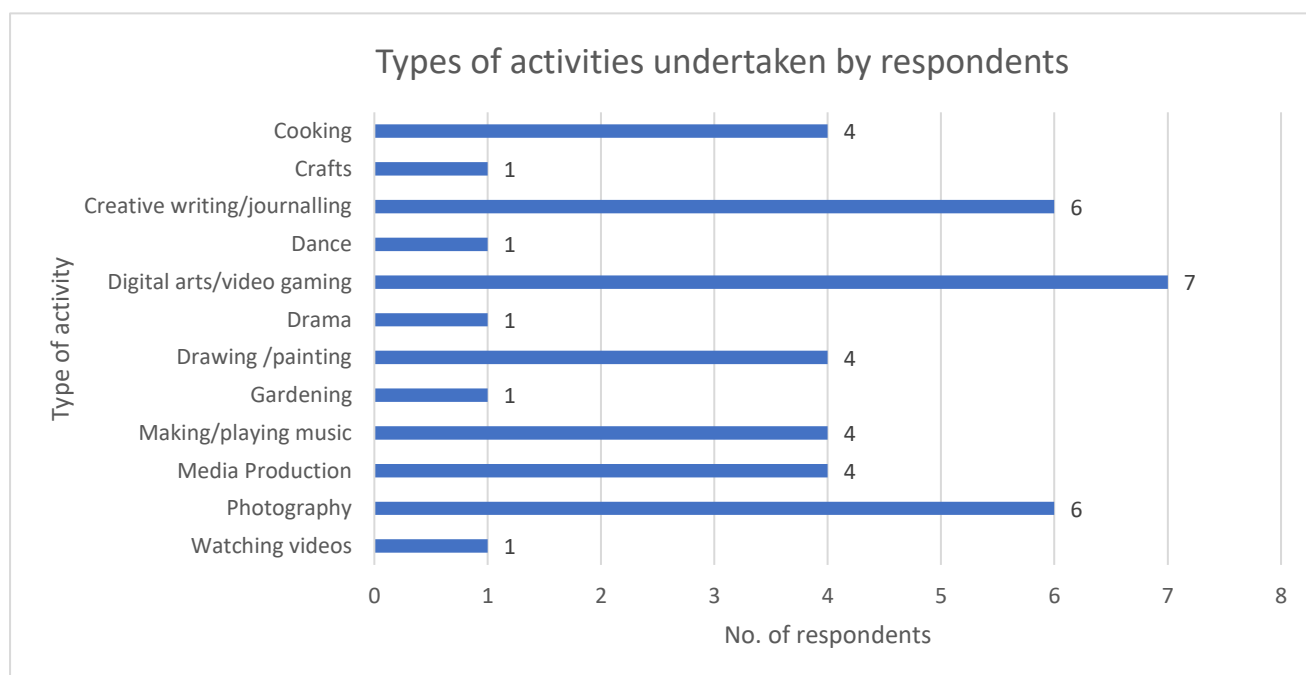
There was no significant increase in the time respondents spent being creative at the end of the project overall, although two (17%) of the respondents had increased their activities by approximately 2 hours a week. There were no major changes in the types of activities that respondents reported doing at the end of the project.

At the end of the project, 50% of respondents reported they definitely intended to continue participating in creative activities over the next three months, 17% reported they probably would continue and 8% reported they would probably not continue. A further 25% were unsure about whether they would continue.

For some of the participants of the project, they were already involved in media content creation prior to taking part, but felt the project broadened their experience and perspectives:

"I'm actually really passionate about film … I've not just gained more experience in the field with my movie making and cinematography… it's also made me aware of the other subjects going on, like from the children in care video I did and the video I did recently about racism… that's made me more confident in my field but also from… a philosophical standpoint that I can approach situations and understand the people more…"

Participant, Interview

For other participants, the project exposed them to new skills, techniques, and areas of work (Interviews.)

Wider impacts
At the end of the project, survey respondents reported:

- They had learnt new skills (100%).
- Made connections with new people (50%).
- They had changed the way they think (33%).

Young people that took part in the post project focus group pointed to a number of wider benefits of being involved in the project, as highlighted below:

Young People Project Focus Group findings (17)

- Boosting their own confidence and validating their thoughts and opinions.
  "It's reminded me that your ideas are valid. For me, it has boosted my confidence in putting forward my thoughts. It's been a positive experience and very motivating."

- Having the opportunity to meet new people and hearing their ideas and stories.
  "Working with new people, meeting new people, especially after being in lockdown for ages, it's nice to socialize and to meet all types of different characters."

- Bringing people together and helping them to feel part of a community.
  "It's made me feel more like I belong in a community that is creating something really positive."

- Providing them with valuable work experience in this field (filmmaking) and new aspects within it.
  "Understanding more things that you can apply and experiencing other aspects of your work."

Experience of the project

100% of those that responded to the survey reported that they enjoyed taking part in the project and two thirds of respondents were somewhat likely, likely, or extremely likely to recommend a project like this to a friend or family member.

Focus group participants and survey respondents outlined areas they especially enjoyed, including:

- Understanding more about new topics and perspectives and sharing this with others.
- Creating new content and seeing their ideas be realised.
- Being given a specific brief to work on.

- Learning new skills, such as editing.
- Gaining a better insight about how best they learn.
- Interviewing people.

However, participants felt that the experience of the project was impacted by the pandemic restrictions. The need to meet virtually for much of the project was a particular challenge:

"I think if we hadn't of had Zoom calls it would have been a lot different and would have gone a lot quicker as well, when in person you can formulate ideas and discussions more easily. Now we have been able to meet in real life, it's all just gone a bit more smoothly."

Participant, Focus Group (17)

"In all honesty it has been very difficult to keep attending these meetings, particularly Zoom as I hate Zoom meetings, I would much rather meet up and do things in person."

Participant, Focus Group (17)

The focus group participants also outlined challenges regarding the recruitment of young people to the project, which impacted both the number of people recruited and the range of people from different backgrounds and groups. These challenges were also captured in the final review meeting, noting that because the timeframes were tight and due to the need to work online, they had to rely on working with existing youth organisations that were already meeting online, and so the recruitment wasn't as broad as desired.

Some suggestions to improve this project were put forwards by participants in both the survey and the focus groups and included:

- Meeting in person wherever possible.
- More focused topics at the meetings which are agreed in advance and allowing people to attend if they have an interest in the topic area.
- Goal setting for the project with timeframes.
- A clearer timetable for the project.
- A longer timeframe for the project.

Sustainability

As of 12th November 2021, the LUMA Instagram channel had 106 followers and 14 pieces of content uploaded.

Many of the young people who were involved in the project are passionate about continuing the work:

"(We) want to make more videos, constantly making videos, hopefully people will see more as well, and as it becomes bigger, we can hopefully tackle more difficult…subject matters so we can keep advancing with our brand to make it …bigger…"

In the final review meeting with the project facilitators, the model of delivery was discussed. There facilitators reflected on two distinct phases to the project: creating the brand and mentoring to support young people to produce the content. The group agreed that if they were to run the project again, they'd do the consultation and work with a small group on the channel brand and then work with wider groups to make the content for the channel.

Summary

Participants reported that they learnt new skills, made connections with new people and half of survey respondents noted that they felt there had been an improvement in their wellbeing. The wellbeing tools, however, did not indicate an effect but this could be due to the starter survey being completed halfway through the project for some respondents. The satisfaction of those taking part in this project was high, even with challenges and frustrations regarding the need to meet virtually for most of the project. There are plans to continue working with young people on the channel LUMA and hopefully positively impact content viewers, in addition to those who have been directly involved in this project.

Ex-rough sleeper projects

This project was targeted at ex-rough sleepers in Hastings and Eastbourne, now housed in temporary accommodation because of the pandemic. The Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) team was keen to both support individuals to develop particular creative talents and interests and enable others to try activities for the first time.

Every RSI service user has very complex and multiple needs, such as a history of trauma, poor mental health, and substance misuse, and often lead chaotic lives. Most service users have a history of entrenched rough sleeping, which severely impacts their social skills, confidence, self-esteem, further contributing to isolation and social exclusion. It can be challenging to engage this group in their routine care and support, let alone something completely different. Often the service users may be untrusting of new people, which is another barrier to engagement.

The programme team opted to work with two different arts providers: Eastbourne Studio Pottery, who could offer ceramics and visual arts input and resonate, a community music organisation. Each project is evaluated in the following sections.

Initial plans were for each organisation to offer 10 weeks of activity in both Hastings and Eastbourne, working where possible in new spaces in the community, rather than in the temporary accommodation itself. For these groups working face to face was important and a few early sessions piloting online delivery only served to reaffirm this.

Both project experienced similar challenges. It was difficult to recruit RSI clients to bespoke weekly sessions in 'new' spaces. The RSI staff worked hard to encourage people to attend but found that they would drop out at the last minute. For both groups it was recognised that a different and more informal approach was needed, hosting sessions in spaces that people frequented anyway and allowing people to try out something or simply observe. Both groups then used the Citadel in Eastbourne and, in Hastings, based activity in the temporary accommodation.

Eastbourne Studio Pottery

About the project

This project worked in collaboration with the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) to provide a series of arts based creative workshops and drop-in taster sessions to RSI service users.

Since March 2021, these sessions have been delivered at several venues including the Eastbourne Pottery Studio (ESP), community bases in St. Leonards and from the Salvation Army's Citadel in Eastbourne. The service users and members of the RSI staff team have been able to explore a variety of media and techniques including printing, painting, experimental photography, and pottery during the sessions. Engaging in creative activity during these sessions has provided a safe space for the service users to relax and chat. The project also participated in England's Creative Coast Geo tour with a group of the service

users. This involved making and installing a Geocache in St. Leonards Warrior Square gardens, which provides insight into the experience of sleeping rough.

The sources of data used to evaluate this project includes:

- Engagement log.
- Participant surveys and pre and post activity positive wellbeing umbrellas.
- Transcript of an interview with a participant conducted and transcribed by Latimer Appleby Ltd.
- End of project review meeting minutes.

Reach

In total there were 50 contacts between 14th April to 06th August through 20 practical sessions delivered across Hastings and Eastbourne. These contacts were comprised of 33 unique individuals. The target set for the number of people directly engaged for the rough sleeper cohort was 25 (50 across both projects), so engaging with 33 individuals exceeded this target. Six sessions did not attract any participants and the number of attendees per session that ran ranged from one to six. Attendance was very low at initial sessions as it was challenging for RSI to encourage attendance at dedicated workshops, but attendance improved over the course of the project, especially when sessions started to be held in the Eastbourne Citadel consistently. Given the challenges of engaging with this group, it is a huge achievement that the team worked with this number of clients.

Effectiveness

Impact on wellbeing

Three participants completed pre and post activity wellbeing umbrellas, measuring how they felt across a range of emotions before and after a creative activity:
- All three participants reported feeling happier after their activity.

- Two of the three participants reported feeling more excited, and
- Two of the three participants reported feeling more inspired.

Four participants also completed a short end of project survey about their experience of taking part. When asked directly if they felt that the project had improved their wellbeing all four said it had, especially in that they felt happier, less angry, and more confident in trying new things.

These numbers are too small to draw conclusions from in terms of the effectiveness of the intervention, but this was a challenging group to engage even to take part in the intervention, and project staff/RSI staff had to balance the need to keep clients engaged in the work with the request to capture evaluation data.

Additionally, qualitative data highlights a potential positive impact on the wellbeing of participants. One of the key workers involved in the project felt there was a clear impact on the participant's wellbeing, which could be seen in the high degree of focus they exhibited when engaging with the activity in otherwise quite chaotic lives:

"In the studio I could see clients really focus for a long period, I was over the moon seeing the client who suffered from anxiety and paranoia start to chit chat with the tutor. That was totally amazing, engaging in that conversation. Seeing his own sense of accomplishment, every session doing something better, seeing him set himself goals. I was watching someone who was doing nothing with their time now setting goals."
Key worker, end of project review meeting

The key worker also reported feedback from one participant about the project:

"This is what I need for my life, I need to get back on track, this is what I love."
Key worker recalling participant's feedback, end of project review meeting.

Another participant, who took part in an interview, highlighted the personal impact the project had had on his mental health:

"Well for my mental health it's been good, yeah. I've had problems with alcohol and stuff so to get me doing something that you know, to fill my time is very positive and I'm close to beating that demon..."

Participant, interview (17)

Wider impacts

All four survey respondents reported that they had learnt new skills from taking part in this project and three of the participants felt that the project has changed the way they think or behave. In the end of project review meeting, the key worker highlighted that she had noticed an improved sense of purpose and agency in some of the participants, with participants setting themselves goals, as well as feeling that the project helped to reduce social isolation.

One participant highlighted that taking part had helped improve his confidence and as a result he was taking part in a course to achieve a City and Guilds level one gardening qualification:

"I used to be very wary of going to new things, very anxious about it but it helped with that. And the sort of people that maybe I wouldn't have associated with generally in life, but I've met different people from a different sort of, you know style of life or way of life or whatever. So now I feel like I can walk into anything with confidence and have a go… My key worker said do you fancy doing this gardening thing and I said yeah because I had the confidence because I had been to the pottery…"

Participant, interview (17)

Having the confidence to attend the gardening course, hopefully with the aim of achieving the qualification, may result in an apprenticeship for this individual and eventually support him into employment.

Experience of the Project

All four participants who completed the survey agreed that they had enjoyed the project, with all saying they were likely or extremely likely to recommend the project to a friend. The only improvements that were suggested were that sessions like these should be available more often.

When one of the participants was asked what he got out of the project he said:

"Just the joy of doing something that you thought you wouldn't be able to do, you know…?
It was rewarding, worthwhile."

Participant, interview

Sustainability

ESP are continuing to work with the RSI at the Eastbourne Citadel on Friday mornings during their drop-in session for the rough sleeping community, as well as continuing to offer studio time for those who are keen to develop their skills at the studio. The RSI is planning to open a dedicated RSI drop-in cafe at the Seaside Community Hub on Tuesday afternoons in the future and would like these creative sessions to be offered there.

The project has helped to identify a model for future delivery with drop-ins and taster sessions delivered in spaces like The Citadel or the new RSI drop-in café and then the possibility of offering sessions in a proper studio space such as ESP. This is the approach that will be developed in Eastbourne. In Hastings, there are plans to develop a new ceramics studio and the decision has been made to delay taster sessions until this new provision is up and running.

Summary

Whilst this project took some time to get going, attendance improved once the project established a consistent presence at the Citadel venue. Due to the complex needs of this cohort, it is a huge achievement for this project to have directly worked with as many people as it did. It has been challenging to collect evaluation materials to support this project, given that this group can be quite hard to engage. However, the participants who did engage in the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive about the project and all felt that taking part had positively impacted their wellbeing and supported them in developing new skills as well as being more confident. Additionally, professionals that worked with the service users provided feedback that the project had positively impacted service user wellbeing, agency, and focus. A more tailored approach to evaluation would need to be taken when working with these cohorts in the future, as it was felt that the evaluation materials were not very well suited to this group.

Resonate -music with ex-rough sleepers

About the project

This project worked in collaboration with the RSI to provide a series of music based creative workshops to RSI service users.

This project began in April 2021 with bespoke sessions delivered in community spaces in Eastbourne and Hastings and switched after three or four weeks to delivery in spaces that service users were already using, which were the Citadel in Eastbourne and Merrick House in Hastings. Some sessions were conducted in small groups and some one-to-one time was also set aside to support participants who may not have felt comfortable to attend a group session. The project facilitators delivered activities based on the participants' interests, this ranged from learning how to play an instrument, discussions about music, jamming with the facilitators to composing and producing an original track.

The sources of data used to evaluate this project includes:

- Engagement log.
- Reflections from the project lead.
- End of project review meeting minutes.

Reach

In total, there were 44 contacts with the project, comprising of 24 individual participants. 18 of those attended at the Eastbourne site and four attended at the Hastings site. 12 participants attended more than one session, with these participants attending between two and six times over the course of the project. The target set for the number of people directly engaged for the rough sleeper cohort was 25 (50 across both projects), so engaging with 24 individuals is very close to this target and over 50 people were reached across both projects.

Approximately 16 additional people were indirectly impacted by the project when attending the Eastbourne space for a breakfast club while live music was being played through the sessions. This figure also includes people who were engaging in the Eastbourne Studio Pottery project as the two schemes shared the same creative space in Eastbourne.

Impact of the project

There are limited evaluation materials available for this project. However, those working on the project captured some quotes from participants in relation to the impact of the project on their wellbeing.

A staff member at one of the venues stated that:

"it's great to have you here and it's really calming for everyone, including the visitors and staff"

RSI team member, reflections from project lead

This suggests that the staff member could see a benefit not only for the participants but also indirectly for those present at the venue, including staff and visitors.

Additionally, one of the participants reported that music made a big difference to his life and that music at the breakfast club had been very soothing. This participant later reported to a GP that the music had been very therapeutic for him.

At the end of project review meeting, one of the key workers outlined the high degree of focus those participants had when they were involved in music and the strong commitment from some participants to work or practice outside of the sessions with the musicians:

"Everything around them is non-existent. For me music is the art form. You can see how it moves people in terms of emotions."

Key worker, end of project review meeting.

Those involved in delivering the project also felt that the project has helped reduced social isolation. Participants have made music with others, jammed, rapped, and played other instruments. People were interacting with each other through music.

Paul, Citadel, Eastbourne

Initially, Paul was very unsure about playing music and described feeling low at the start of each session. However, every time he attended a session, he reported a significant improvement in how he was feeling:

"I got out of bed the wrong side this morning and wasn't up for anything, I thought I'd just chat with you a bit today but playing some music with you both has really sorted me out" (Participant, 18/06/21)

His key worker also highlighted a transformation in his wellbeing:

"My client … was transformed today by taking part. He felt rotten when he got here and now is really smiling" (Key worker, 11/06/21)

Paul attended three sessions and intends to return in the future if the scheme continues.

Two case studies are presented below, outlining the experience of a participant at the Hastings and the Eastbourne sites. Both names have been changed to ensure participant anonymity.

Anna, Merrick House, Hastings

Over seven weeks, Anna attended six sessions and worked closely with the music leaders. In one of the earlier sessions, one of the music leaders outlined her perception of Anna's experience of taking part:

"(She) seemed really grounded by having taken part. She sang with us, recorded, tried some guitar, and wrote lyrics. She also said she's planning to write more lyrics in her own time now that she's got into it" (Music leader, 01/06/21)

Throughout the sessions she sang, wrote lyrics, and played several instruments. As the sessions progressed, Anna described how playing music makes her feel and one of the areas she'd like to develop in musically:

"I love how playing piano feels; the way the minor and major chords give things meaning. I haven't played for years but I'd really like to. I'll be here next week. If you can help to teach me, I'd like that" (Participant, 18/06/21)

Towards the end of the project Anna produced an original track alongside the music leaders using music production software. Within the track, Anna performed the cello, strings, vocal, beat selection, percussion and selected the chords and harmonies. Initially she did not feel confident to sing, but the music leaders worked with her to develop her confidence. The only instrument that a music leader played on the track was the guitar.

Post-production of her work is being completed by one of the music leaders. Anna has said that she is proud of the track and what she has achieved. This track has been used in a short film about the Everyday Creativity programme which can be seen on the Culture Shift website.

Sustainability

Two participants who wanted to continue playing music after the project ended have been given guitars via the RSI team. The project team are currently considering ways of offering music sessions to this cohort in the future.
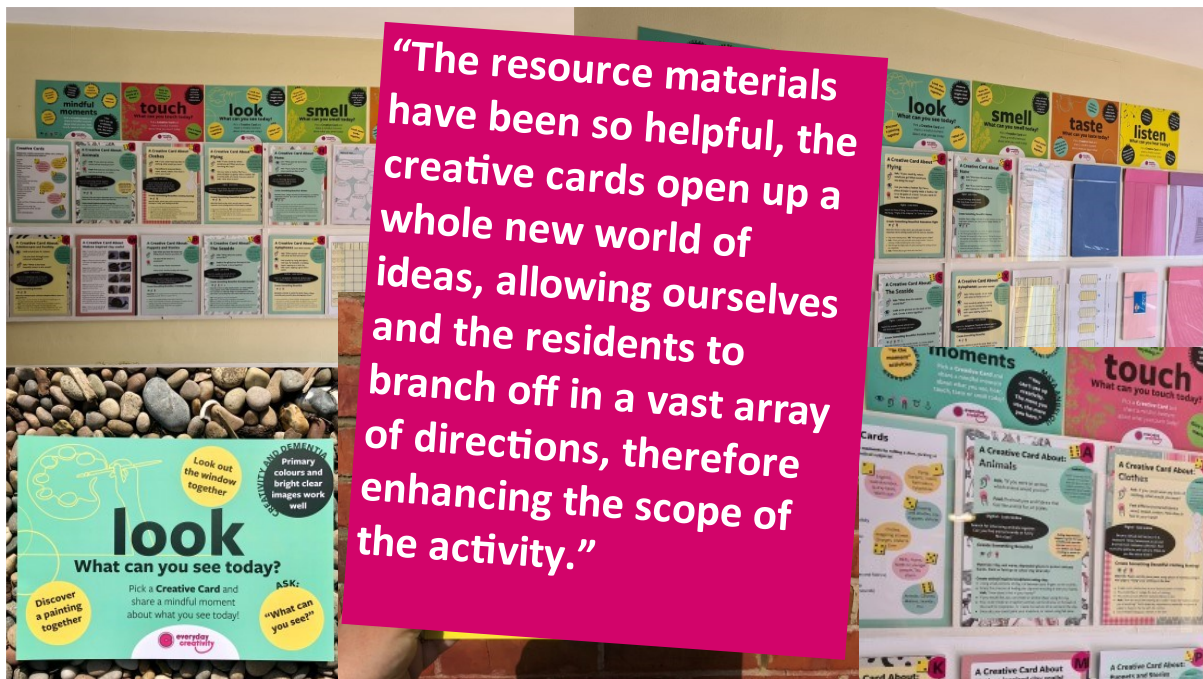
Summary

As with the Eastbourne Studio Pottery project, this project took some time to get going, but attendance improved once the project established a consistent presence at venues that the service users already used. Due to the complex needs of this cohort, it is a huge achievement for this project to have directly worked with as many people as it did.

Due to the lack of quantitative evaluation data available because of challenges engaging with this cohort, there was insufficient data available to evaluate the effectiveness of this project. However, the qualitative feedback collected by those involved in the project suggested that the participants really enjoyed the sessions and a number stated that their mood improved following a session and felt more confident. A more tailored approach to evaluation would need to be taken when working with these cohorts in the future, as it was felt that the evaluation materials were not very well suited to this group.

Everyday Creativity in Care

About the project

Three independent artists joined forces to design and deliver an arts-based project in care homes in East Sussex, a population group that has been especially impacted by the pandemic restrictions. The project aimed to demonstrate how engagement in creative activities can support wellbeing and reduce isolation. The team worked closely with Activity Coordinators (ACs) across nine care homes in East Sussex to support them to lead creative activities with residents as part of daily personalised care. 32 activity cards were developed to support care home staff to engage with residents' varied interests and life experiences in a creative way. The cards were designed following consultation with staff and explored a range of interests and focused on using all of the senses. They were designed in such a way as to ensure that they were accessible to people with different impairments. These activity cards were delivered to each home in a box with materials and pamper products for staff. All the support was delivered online through weekly zoom session between the Activity Coordinators and project leads.

"The resource materials have been so helpful, the creative cards open up a whole new world of ideas, allowing ourselves and the residents to branch off in a vast array of directions, therefore enhancing the scope of the activity."

The sources of data used to evaluate this project includes:

- Engagement log.
- Canterbury Wellbeing Scales dataset (16).
- Care Homes staff focus group (with four of five attendees being involved in this project).
- End of project review meeting minutes.

Reach

From April 2021 to July 2021, 134 creative sessions or activities were held. In total, 39 people were involved across eight care homes (one home closed during the project.) The target for the number of people directly engaged for the care homes cohort was 25 (50 across both projects), so engaging with 39 residents exceeded this target. Residents took part in anything between one and six activities with most doing three or four. Engaging with the staff at the care homes was pivotal to the success of the project and overall, 22 staff were involved in the project. Additionally, ten family members of residents were involved either via interaction with an activity coordinator or through interacting on social media.
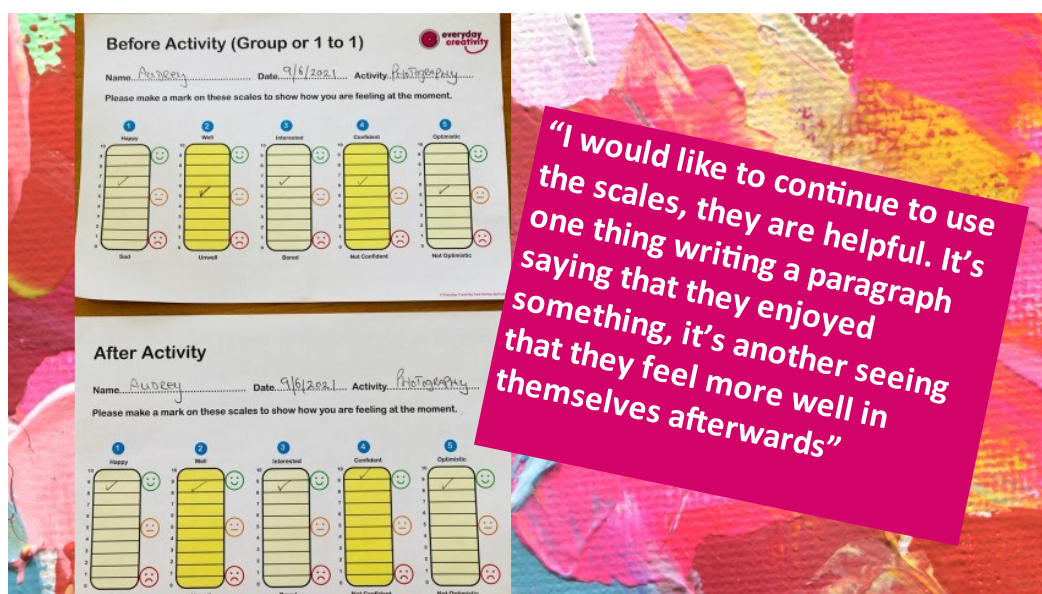
The progress of the project was documented widely on Instagram, with the Everyday Creativity Care Account reaching 11,000 accounts and 12,000 accounts reached via Culture Shift during a two-day takeover.

The project's Instagram page can be found here: #everydaycreativitycare hashtag on Instagram • Photos and Videos

Effectiveness

Impact on wellbeing

For this project, impact on wellbeing was monitored by the Canterbury Wellbeing Scales (CWS), used pre and post activity evaluation tool. The CWS was developed in 2014/15 to assess subjective wellbeing in people with mild to moderate dementias, family caregivers, and professionals who care for this population (16). The tool was redesigned by the project team to be simple, colourful, and straightforward. The care home staff felt very positively about the scales and could see from the improved scores that their work was making a difference. This meant that most activities were evaluated in this way, providing useful data to understand the effectiveness of the creative activities on wellbeing.

"I would like to continue to use the scales, they are helpful. It's one thing writing a paragraph saying that they enjoyed something, it's another seeing that they feel more well in themselves afterwards"

Individuals that took part in a creative session (both individual or a group session) were supported to score themselves against each domain of the CWS before the activity and then again after the activity. The difference between the scores was calculated for each individual taking part in each domain. Where there was an improvement of 1 point or greater, this was categorised as an improvement in that domain. The number of activities resulting in an improvement was divided by the total number of activities to produce the percentage of sessions that resulted in an improved score in each domain. This is summarised in figure C:

Figure C: Percentage of sessions that resulted in an improved wellbeing score
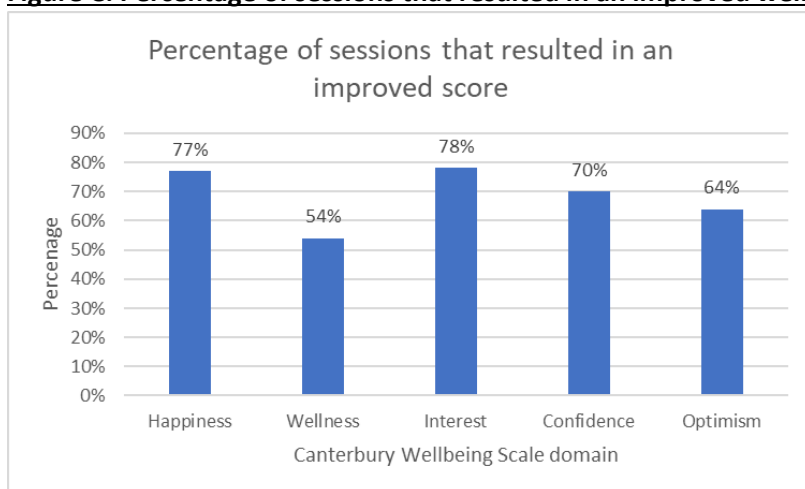
As shown in figure c:

- 77% of sessions resulted in an improved happiness score.
- 54% of sessions resulted in an improved wellness score.
- 78% of sessions resulted in an improved interest score.
- 70% of sessions resulted in an improved confidence score.
- 64% of sessions resulted in an improved optimism score.

This demonstrates the project's positive impact across multiple aspects of wellbeing in this population group.

Further to this, the activity coordinators felt the project had improved wellbeing in residents:

"I've definitely noticed a difference in their wellbeing and the way they're feeling about things and the positivity"

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

One compelling example of this was a resident who had initial reservations about participating but with some encouragement drew a beautiful robin. The AC acknowledged the effort of this and put a copy of the picture up on the wall of her office:

"He was over the moon, he was like 'you are just going to get rid of it after I've done it anyway so it's pointless doing it', so when it was done, I printed a copy, and it is above my desk at work. I know it's simple, but it just brought tears to his eyes that some(one) was appreciative of what he does."

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

A further example related to a clothing-based activity card which resulted in the AC finding images of 1950s dresses for the resident which brought up many memories for the resident:

"It was a really lovely session, it jogged her memory so much, she was telling me all sorts of stuff and we were dancing around the room. The beauty is you start in one place and don't know where you will end up"

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

One positive aspect of this project was that the ACs were able to personalise and expand the activities and then go on a journey with the resident about their experiences and interests in relation to that. For instance, a creative card about travel would result in an AC finding pictures of places that the resident had been to, a love of trains, then looking up trains, and ending up looking at images of cherry blossom in Japan.

Impact on participation in creative activities

Before the project started, ACs reported that they have been struggling to maintain the residents' interest in the usual in-house activities that were the sole source of entertainment due to the pandemic restrictions. Residents were becoming bored and ACs were searching for new ideas but there was only so much they could think of.

The ACs were delighted with the activity cards that this project provided as they:

- Provided structure and focus to activities.
- Acted as a discussion point for residents, with residents holding and selecting the activity they wished to complete.
- Enabled ACs to easily adapt activities to the needs / abilities of residents.
- Provided useful links and identified ways to enhance engagement.
- Were easy to understand, even for those who don't speak English as a first language.

Extract from focus group report (17)

The activity cards provided a range of options, in an easy-to-use format and also enabled residents' choice:

"I was blown away when I received the box, it was fantastic how it was put together, that made things really easy, once you decided which card you were going to do"

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

"What I liked was the fact that the residents had these cards - they could actually see them and choose what to do if they wanted to do anything from them"

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

The ACs spoke very highly of how the project was managed, describing the project leads as approachable and adaptable. One of the ACs who took part in the focus group noted that a resident at her home loved horses and she mentioned this to the project lead who then developed a specific activity around this.

Wider impacts

A notable benefit of this project was in increasing the skills and confidence of ACs and other care staff to run creative sessions with residents:

"It's reduced the stress of coming up with an idea to facilitate a group session and achieve the right outcome. It has eased that pressure"

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

ACs reported that the activity cards took the stress out of planning and running creative activities, as well as being a great way of having fun with residents and learning more about them.

The project also prompted ACs to think about how one creative activity can be adapted in many ways to better suit the needs of residents and that the cards enabled a structured way of engaging one to one with residents, which for many is a more meaningful experience.

Additionally, ACs reported that a tension can exist between ACs and care support staff, but this project has helped to overcome that:

There is a kind of stigma between what is an activity job and what's a care staff job, that's been the case for many years, but by having these cards it's opened the bridge to discussion, when they have been struggling the cards have helped them to think differently"

Activity Coordinator, focus group

Finally, during the focus group, ACs reported that staff involved in the project had been upskilled in relation to the use of technology and really valued the ability to connect with ACs at other homes involved.

Experience of the Project

Staff

During the focus group, ACs reported that capacity was one of the biggest barriers to engaging with the project, especially in terms of working on a one-to-one basis with some residents. Some, but not all, homes also found the need to work remotely with the project leads was a significant challenge. Further to this, the project aimed to engaged families of residents throughout the project, but this wasn't always easy, with some families living far away or not visiting regularly.

The ACs felt that the greatest benefit of the project was when creative activities were delivered on a one-to-one basis, which was more time consuming. However, staff felt it was better to spend high quality time with residents on an activity of their choice and this was also very beneficial for less confident residents:

"The residents felt better listened to, that their opinion on things mattered – there was a sudden realisation that I was interested in them as a person."

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

One of the care home managers involved in the design and delivery of the project highlighted in the end of project review meeting that the project has been very motivational for staff. It has blurred the boundaries between activity, wellbeing, and personalized care. He felt that there may even be a positive impact on recruitment. The activity cards were also seen to be really helpful for care staff with English as a second language.

Residents

The ACs felt that the residents really enjoyed the project and it had generated a lot of interest amongst residents:

"They love it, they see those cards come in and they automatically know there's going to be something taking place, no matter what it may be".

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

One AC noted that the residents she chose to take part in the project had specific needs and typically weren't interested in any forms of activity. However, as the activities were very person centred, these residents were more readily able to engage with them:

"It gave them a little bit more confidence knowing that the activity was going to be slightly adapted for them as well, a bit more person-centred, it kind of engaged them more, and I suppose just sort of brought them into the group rather than feeling that they were excluded, because sometimes, it felt that way because they either had a one-to-one, or they were left waiting for a little while, while you get everyone else sorted."

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

A key piece of learning from this project, is that it's not the output that matters, it's the process and the interaction between resident and care worker:

"There is a tension between a beautiful conversation and a thing to share and show. Beautiful moments happen all the time."

Care home representative, end of project review meeting

Sustainability

The ACs who took part in the focus group all stated they were very likely to continue the creative practices following the end of the project because of the impact on their residents:

"I cannot rate this project enough and if done regularly with support for the ACs too, could make such a huge difference to how residents live their lives within care homes, with regards to meaningful activity."

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

Some of the care homes involved are part of larger companies, with many other care homes around the county or country even. The care homes involved have been so impressed that they intend to try and expand the work to other care homes that their organisations run:

"We're part of the bigger group … and there's 45 other homes all around the country. Obviously, I've been keeping them informed of what's going on and the progress and they're all very keen. Everyone's very excited about it so we want to branch it off and use it in all the other homes because it works, pure and simple and it's amazing, really."

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

"I've just been raving about it through the whole of our organisation. [My organisation] is going to try and expand it to all their homes"

Activity Coordinator, focus group (17)

The potential, therefore, for this project to have a meaningful and lasting legacy is significant.

The project team has plans to constitute themselves as an organization to assist with future applications for funding and to further develop the work. Future plans include extending the work within each home through engaging all staff, rather than focusing solely on the ACs.

Summary

This data collected using the CWS indicates the intervention had a demonstrable impact on the wellbeing of care home residents through taking part in these creative activities. Qualitative evaluation suggested that both residents and staff really enjoyed being involved, despite some challenges of support being provided virtually. It has improved the skills and confidence of the care home staff in delivering creative activities, reduced their stress levels and enabled them to have fun with and to learn more about their residents. This type of intervention, where staff in the setting are given the tools and confidence to run the sessions themselves, has the potential to be very cost effective. Some of the parent companies of the homes that were involved are considering how they might expand this work to other homes, potentially having a significant impact on the wellbeing of many care home residents across the country.

Raise Your Voice in care

About the project

Raise Your Voice (RYV) in Care is a new strand of a longstanding community music project. RYV started off as a community choir at Glyndebourne for people with a diagnosis of dementia to attend with a friend or family member. In their work, they observed that as people moved into care homes singing disappeared from their lives and so this project aimed to bring music and singing into everyday life in care homes.

RYV was commissioned to pilot and develop resources to support singing in care homes under the Everyday Creativity programme. Initially they ran Zoom sessions for staff and residents to understand better what was needed and then refined and developed their resources to support staff to lead singing for residents. Online videos have been produced to support care home staff lead warm-ups and songs, provide improvisation ideas, and use movement and percussion in a musical session. The final stage of the project saw the project leads mentor and support staff using their resources. The emphasis has been to encourage staff to use signing as part of their 1-1 everyday interactions as well as group singing. RYV now has an online library of materials for the staff to pick and choose from.

An example of one of the musical prompt cards from the online library

The overarching aim of the project was to encourage and support care home staff to share and feel confident in singing and making music with residents and their families. Through delivering the intervention in this way and empowering care staff to lead the sessions themselves, the hope is that music can become part of the everyday fabric of life in the care homes.

The sources of data used to evaluate this project includes:

- Engagement log.
- Care Homes staff focus group (with one of five attendees being involved in this project.)
- End of project review meeting minutes.
- Written feedback from care home staff to project leads- through email exchanges, discussions and one RYV survey.

As the project was being run during an incredibly difficult time for care homes, with high levels of pressure on staff, the project leads found that care home staff didn't feel they had

the time or capacity to use the evaluation tools provided by the EC Programme.   Efforts to adapt the Canterbury Wellbeing scales for this project were not successful, and the creatives ran their own survey for care home staff, and responses from one survey was included in the evaluation, as noted above. The RYV team also asked care home staff to fill in weekly observation sheets, however, this data was not considered usable for the purpose of this evaluation as it was not consistent or objective.

Reach

The project worked closely with two care homes. In one care home, 32 residents and eight staff members were engaged via this work. In the other care home, 20 residents and three staff members were engaged via this work. The target set for the number of people directly engaged for the care homes cohort was 25 (50 across both projects), so this exceeded this target.

Effectiveness

Impact on wellbeing

No quantitative data was gathered in this project. This section therefore focuses on the subjective views of those involved on the impact on resident wellbeing.

Feedback from the care home staff involved in the project suggest that they felt there had been a positive impact on the wellbeing of their residents:

"So, it's just been really fun, and you just notice like at the end (of) every activity or singing activity we've done this like, yeah, they're notably happy."

Care home manager, Focus group (17)

When asked if staff have tried out any of the warm-up greetings informally with residents between sessions a staff member advised that:

"Some of the care staff have greeted residents with a "tune" when getting them up in the morning. Some residents have loved this, others have loathed it complaining because the carers are too jolly."

Care Home staff member written feedback

Further to this, one care home staff member advised that the activities had been:

"Really beneficial for lifting the mood of the residents…"
Care Home staff member written feedback

Impact on participation in creative activities

Taking part in the project was noted to have increased interest in music amongst staff and residents, both in terms of playing music and singing:

"It's extended outside just the normal singing session, so you see quite often now where we've always got music playing and people just singing whilst doing the other activities."

Care Home manager, focus group (17)

Another staff member talked about the value of this project in reigniting an existing interest in music within the home:

"(The Care Home) was a very musical care home but when (we were) shut down in (the) pandemic (it was) very difficult. The project definitely rekindled things to a wider group"

Care Home staff member written feedback

Wider impact

Interaction between staff and residents and between residents had been limited during the pandemic. One staff member highlighted how this project has helped to increase connections between people:

"It triggers conversations – like what is your favourite song and then everyone sings along."

Care Home manager, focus group (17)

Experience of the Project
Staff

One care home reported that the online sessions with RYV were:
"…brilliant and were a great starting point for staff who had never engaged with singing before…"

Care Home staff member written feedback

Over time, this led to an increased confidence in care home staff leading the activities themselves. One staff member noted that the support that followed later in the project was hugely helpful to the home:

"The first four weeks were virtual and having to do our own vocal activities in the home, in the last four weeks we received the resources which massively helped us do our own thing. There was more support in that section."
Care Home manager, focus group (17)

The facilitated session with the project leads alongside the online library of resources was perceived to have opened the door to different ways that staff can engage with residents using music as a starting point:

"It has become our responsibility to evolve and do ourselves. The whole idea is being able to pass the skill to be able to run their own workshops with other staff."
Care Home manager, focus group (17)

It was suggested by staff that the resources could have been introduced earlier in the project as staff felt the greatest benefit when they were able to access these. Overall, the care home staff feedback that they really valued the online library, and this was key to the project's success *(Care home staff written feedback and focus group).* Unfortunately, due to the timeframes associated with this project this was unavoidable, but this would be possible in any further roll out of this work into other care homes.

Residents

Due to the pandemic restrictions, the early sessions were conducted virtually, with online sessions or digital activities. Whilst this was necessary to keep residents safe, participating in this way was challenging for some residents, especially where they had cognitive impairment or hearing issues. A care home staff member outlined that resident struggled to engage with the sessions when they were online:

"I think it's that disconnect with the virtual side of things and perhaps understanding fully."

Care Home manager, focus group (17)

However, it was noted that this was less of an issue when the project leads were able to attend in person or the care home staff led the sessions in person:

"… when we did it ourselves or when (Project leads) came in person, we all did it together it was far better really."

Care Home manager, focus group (17)

Another staff member outlined that the ideas and tools that the project had utilised, helped residents engage in a more relaxed way:

"Using (the RYV ideas) with the residents has also helped everyone to engage in a more relaxed way."

Care Home staff member written feedback

Importantly, the staff found that the exercises and ideas could also work well when working with bed-bound residents, so they were included in the project. *(Care home staff written feedback.)*

Sustainability

Qualitative feedback from care home staff suggests that the residents enjoyed the activities and that there is an interest to continue bringing music into the home:

> "The singing sessions were really well received here with the residents, and there's definitely been a real keen interest to carry on introducing more and more of a musical influence here."

Care Home staff member written feedback

One of the aims of the project was to enable care home staff to lead musical sessions themselves and care home staff felt this is exactly what it did:

> "…the project was great of giving us tools and inspiration for running our own sessions…"

Care Home staff member written feedback

Such a model has the potential of having a longstanding benefit to residents within the care homes involved.

In the long term, the project leads intend to expand this work into the wider Sussex care home community, building on lessons learnt from participating in this project. The team would also like to create hubs for care homes to share their practice. Further to this, the project team want to connect care homes with other local creative groups like choirs and build a pool of music professionals who are older people/dementia friendly to go into care homes to support work like this.

Summary

Whilst there were some initial challenges when this project was operating remotely and prior to the introduction of the online resources. There was insufficient data to assess the effectiveness of the intervention on resident wellbeing. However, the qualitative data collected suggests that both staff and residents enjoyed taking part in the project, taking part had a role to play in lifting the mood of some residents and that over time staff developed the confidence and skills to lead the musical activities themselves. Due to the model used, with staff able and keen to continue leading these activities, there is the potential for the benefits of this project to be felt by residents well beyond the end of the project.

Personal Assistants

About the project

A personal assistant or PA is someone who provides assistance in the home, supporting that person to retain their independence. This project was delivered by a team of experienced creative practitioners / University lecturers with specialisms in collaborative practice and large audience participation in online creativity.

The project sought to engage Personal Assistants (PAs) in a programme of Everyday Creativity facilitated by an online co-design workshop and engagements through the three regional East Sussex Personal Assistant Network (ESPAN) monthly meetings. The programme used the feedback and input of PAs to develop a range of activities through both digital and physical media to help encourage daily creativity.

One challenge of this project is that PAs are quite a disparate group and typically very independent individuals. This was recognized at the start of the project, but it became apparent that this group was even more disparate than originally thought. This was not only because there was no single point of access for the group, but also because many PAs actively did not want to be part of a wider collective. In fact, the project's link to the ESPAN networks was an actual barrier to engagement for some PAs. During the project it was also necessary to follow COVID-19 restrictions, and so interventions had to be delivered remotely. Due to these challenges, a three-pronged approach was developed following the co-design workshop.

This included:
1. A dedicated webpage for information associated with the project: Everyday Creativity - Case studies - Community21
2. A Facebook group to engage PAs in continuous feeds of creative activity developed by the team and / or prompted by PA's and their activities: Everyday Creativity | Facebook
3. A bespoke creativity pack(s).

The sources of data used to evaluate this project includes:

- Engagement log.

- Focus group report conducted and analysed by Latimer Appleby Ltd. This included two PAs and four professionals involved in delivering and supporting the project.
- End of project review meeting minutes.
- Pre and post wellbeing umbrella tools for eight participants who took part in the co-design session.
- Reflection from project lead.

Reach

The project ran from March until early June 2021. Over the course of the project, there were 55 members of Facebook group and 25 recipients of bespoke creative packs. Additionally, 18 PAs were present for an initial presentation about the project and 13 were involved in the co-design workshop. Approximately 35 PAs were engaged across most or all of the duration of the project, compared to a target of 30 so this exceeded expectations.

Further to this, 350 PAs received an email alerting them to the project and opportunity to get involved and 85 creative students engaged in presentations regarding the project, with 15 undertaking a creative project relating to the design of the activities.

Effectiveness

Impact on wellbeing

During one of the co-design workshops, participants completed pre and post activity wellbeing umbrellas, measuring how they felt across a range of emotions before and after the session.

Following the session:
- 50% of participants reported feeling more enthusiastic.
- 37.5% of participants reported feeling more excited.
- 50% of participants reported feeling happier.
- 62.5% of participants reported feeling more inspired.

It should be noted however, that most PAs that completed the scales had high pre activity scores in most domains. The average pre activity score across all domains was 4 (out of 5) and so the capacity for improvement across these emotions using these scales was very limited.

During the focus group, the PAs reported that they felt that participating had improved their wellbeing, with one PA suggesting she had learnt about new creative pursuits and felt motivated to share creative practice with other people. The other PA outlined that a key element that has improved his wellbeing was being able to connect to other PAs:

"There has been so much going on with this, it's almost hard to find a specific thing to say because there's just been so much. So yeah, being part of a group and doing something we're all enjoying, some of us perhaps weren't expecting to get so much out of."

PA participant, focus group (17)

These new connections with other PAs via the Facebook group, alongside the creative packs provided, brought laughter and fun to this PA:

"One of the things we got in the box is these iron on transfers, I haven't got a clue what they were, well, myself and one of the others, we ended up getting into this silly thing about how you could iron them on your socks. And don't ask me how but we ended up with Y-fronts to try so it's just these silly things, but it makes a difference to your day, it just gives you an opportunity to have that little bit of light heartedness."

PA participant, focus group (17)

Impact on participation in creative activities

This project explored what it means to be creative and how a much wider range of activities can be considered creative than many people typically think.

This concept was explored in one of the co-design sessions, in a creative way, with PAs. PAs were asked to think about what activities they considered creative and placed images and post its of these activities on a shared platform. A screengrab of the outcome of this process is displayed in Figure D.

Figure D: Screengrab of PAs view of types of creative activities.

Discussions between PAs and the project team enabled some PAs to change their perception about their own hobbies and interests, which previously they may not have considered creative. One of the PAs who participated in the focus group outlined that they did not see themselves to be at all creative prior to the project:

"They drew out to me the fact that I like doing photography and I've never really considered that to be creative as such, I just sort of see it as a hobby…I don't consider myself to be what I used to term as 'arty-farty', I can't see things, for me it's just a case of, I do it, I like that picture, I don't like that one."

PA participant, focus group (17)

Discussions with the project team enabled this participant to understand that their hobby of photography was a form of creativity. Over the course of the project, this new understanding of creativity has blossomed, with the PA open to trying out new ideas and this has had positive impacts on his relationship with family members too:

"I came across this video of building a hedgehog house and my Grandson had a hedgehog in his garden, so we built one out of old bricks and paving slabs. Being through this, it sort of made me look at things and do things differently. Making that hedgehog house was, I suppose in a way, creative. I wouldn't have thought about doing it before. If I do something around the house it's because it's needed, this was sort of more of a thing I could do with the grandchildren. It was great just doing something with him and we were having a laugh and, you know, it was all planned out as well which is good."

PA participant, focus group (17)

Another PA involved in the focus group, outlined that they already considered themself a creative person, but this project had enabled her to expand her creative practice, which she felt was a significant benefit.

Wider Impacts

One key aspect of this work has been connecting this usually very disparate group of professionals to one another. One of the PAs outlined the need for this, highlighting that he often felt lonely in his role:

> "Being a PA, you work on your own, alone, a lot, and it's only you and your client, sometimes if you've got a client who is in the advanced stages of dementia or one of my guys is a stroke victim, you've got very limited communication and you're trying to work things out."

PA participant, focus group (17)

This project, especially the Facebook group, has helped this PA to connect with other PAs, exchange ideas and share creative outputs, such as his photography:

> "It's given me a chance to go and do other things and, you know, people come up with other ideas about things. I was going to post on there this week an idea of people taking photographs of things hidden in plain sight, which is a project I have been reading about elsewhere as a result of this."

PA participant, focus group (17)

Whilst there are existing forums that aim to bring PAs together in East Sussex, some form of community interaction emerged via the Facebook group that was not evident previously for this group *(End of Project Review Meeting.)* For PAs who experience loneliness in their role, these new connections to other professionals have the potential to improve their wellbeing.

Additionally, both PAs expressed that the project has developed their professional practice in terms of activities they can do with their clients:

> "Certainly, putting together and decorating a bird box I think that'd be quite nice to do with older clients, so it's given me some ideas."

PA participant, focus group (17)

The PAs felt that many of the materials included in the creativity pack enabled this but also the ideas generated throughout the process, such as through seeing other PAs post their activities on the Facebook page.

Experience of the Project

The project team considered the co-design process as a particular strength of the project in that it enabled the PAs to reflect in a creative way on their situations and experiences and there was demonstrable value in this process as a creative activity in and of itself *(End of project review meeting.)*

The PAs involved in the focus group were highly impressed with the creativity packs and felt very motivated to make use of the wide range of resources provided:

"I thought it would just be some colouring-in pens and a sketchbook, to receive all this stuff you know a Lino kit, acrylic paint, a bird box - which I've actually made up. I have to say this is quality stuff, you could really spend some time doing all this and getting stuck in."

PA participant, focus group (17)

One PA highlighted that they had immersed themselves in the process and really enjoyed spending time on the Facebook page and seeing what other people had been doing:

"I want to spend my evenings going through Facebook and seeing the different things that have gone on".

PA participant, focus group (17)

The main challenges of being involved related to making the time to be creative:

"Finding the time to do it, but also making the time to do it. You've got to make the time to do it, otherwise you're not going to get the benefit from it."

PA participant, focus group (17)

In terms of wider participation from PAs, one of the participants described misperceptions from other PAs that this project was for creative people and how these views have prevented their engagement in the project:

"They said to me you have to be really arty or interested in art to subscribe to the pack."

PA participant, focus group (17)

The project team reflected on this, noting that the term 'creativity' is loaded and often presumed to refer to someone who is already skillful or those who identify as 'arty,' which can exclude some. The language used in future projects exploring everyday creativity therefore should be carefully considered. *(End of project review meeting.)*

Finally, this project has highlighted digital inequalities that persist in East Sussex. The project lead highlighted that some of the PAs involved in the online sessions did not have reliable wi-fi, especially those living in rural areas. With activities so reliant on online workshops and forums during the pandemic, this disadvantages some PAs from participating. It is also more

resource intensive as a second facilitator is needed in a session to ensure someone is available to support with technical issues. *(Project lead reflections.)*

Sustainability

Both PAs involved in the focus group outlined that they intended to sustain their creative practice in the future. Further to this, they welcomed the opportunity to continue sharing, connecting, and learning from other PAs via the Facebook group:

"I would hope that the everyday creativity page on the Facebook page is going to stay open and try and get other PAs to just put their bits on there."

PA participant, focus group (17)

The project team plan to leave the Facebook page open but it will not be monitored now that the project has come to an end and continued activity will depend on input from group members.

The PAs also noted their hopes that the project might be rolled out further, enabling more PAs to benefit from everyday creativity in the future.

Summary

This innovative project brought together a typically disparate group of professionals and encouraged a broadening understanding of what it is to be creative, as well as providing tools and ideas to increase creative practice. Data derived from a co-design session, which was delivered in a creative way itself, suggested a pre to post activity improvement in a number of emotions during the session, including enthusiasm, excitement, happiness, and inspiration. Qualitative feedback from PAs who participated suggested that they really benefited from the project, especially in terms of coming together with other PAs and sharing ideas. Both PAs who took part in the focus group had high hopes that this work would continue and be expanded so that a wider range of PAs would benefit.

RESTORE – for people furloughed or unemployed

About the project
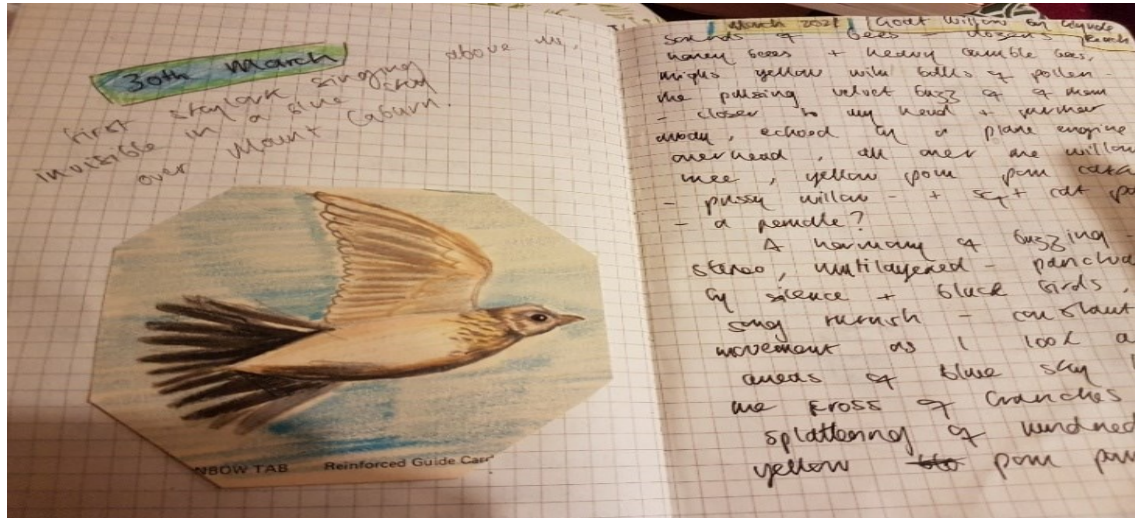
This project was led by Creative Future, an organization that supports people facing social, health and other types of barriers to unlock their personal, professional, and artistic potential. Creative development sessions were provided aiming to facilitate self-expression, reflection, realisation, mindfulness, and actualisation. Facilitators are all from underrepresented groups themselves and the target group for this project was for people who had been furloughed or who were unemployed. The cohort group was quite diverse and anonymous and so the project team made links with local job centres and libraries to help reach the target group.

A range of short courses were offered to the cohort:

- Finding your creativity and preventing overwhelm- coaching session.
- Nature writing and journaling for wellbeing.
- Finding time for creativity.
- Finding everyday creativity through photography
- Creative writing for wellbeing.

The project began in March 2021 until 20th July 2021.
The sources of data used to evaluate this project includes:

- Engagement log.
- Three interviews with participants, conducted and analysed by Latimer Appleby Ltd.
- End of project review meeting minutes.

Reach

144 people signed up for the courses. 75 people attended at least one session of a course, with 64 people attending more than one session on one of the courses. The original engagement target was 100 people.

The project leads were unsure as to why the sign up was very high, but the numbers reduced significantly in terms of actual attendees and wondered whether this was due to online meeting fatigue or perhaps because the workshops were free and so people attributed less value to attending *(End of project review meeting.)* Additionally, there were some cases where people signed up but found employment prior to the session.

Effectiveness

Impact on wellbeing

No quantitative data was gathered in this project. This section therefore focuses on the subjective views of those involved on the impact on their wellbeing.

During the interviews, participants noted that a key motivating factor for their taking part in the project was their experience of the pandemic, the restrictions and of being unemployed or furloughed at the time. One participant outlined that they had been feeling more isolated than usual and participating in the project was a way of combating that:

> "I think with the pandemic everyone was feeling more isolated than usual, so just glad I got the chance (to take part)."

Participant, interview (17)

Another participant outlined that they wanted to explore ways to channel their thoughts and feelings:

> "Partly because of the impact of the most recent lockdown. I found it quite depressing and wanted a way of channeling my thoughts and feelings."

Participant, interview (17)

Further to this, one participant hoped that the project would help them focus, as they would complete the tasks that were set for them as part of the sessions:

> "I think I was hoping it would just focus me a bit more, I'm better when I have a goal or someone giving me homework, so it was more about that really."

Participant, interview (17)

All three participants who were interviewed reported that they felt that taking part had improved their mental health and wellbeing. As the sessions progressed, one participant outlined that taking part had improved her confidence:

> "It gave me more confidence to get out, especially suffering with social anxiety, as there is a reason that I am there."

Participant, interview (17)

Another participant, who took part in the nature journaling course, outlined that taking part had made them more mindful and curious:

> "Part of it was about stopping and noticing smaller things, perhaps looking up how these had been used in the past. This expanded my ability to do this and different ways and means to find things out."

Participant, interview (17)

Taking part in the project also provided an increased sense of motivation for some participants:

"It pushed me to go outdoors and look at things differently…it energised my world."

Participant, interview (17)

Impact on participation in creative activities

All three participants who took part in the interviews considered themselves to be somewhat creative before taking part in this project. However, the project helped all three of them to expand their creative practice or better understand what creative activities they value:
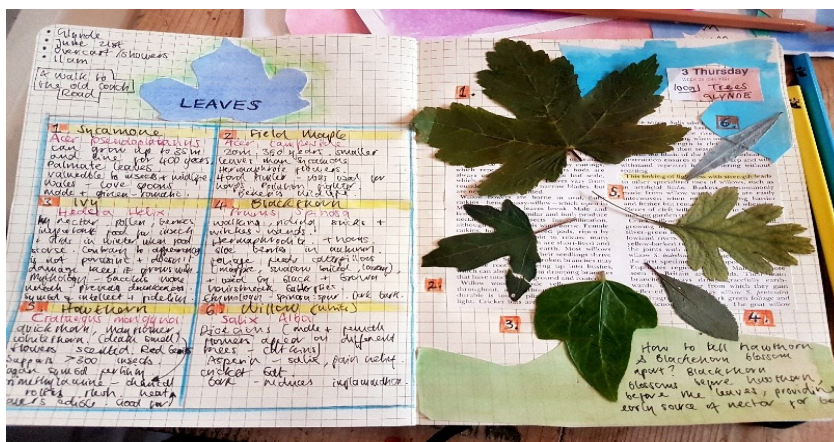
"It helped me to learn that perhaps I'm better with more dynamic things, hands on and practical (like the photography) that encourage you to look outwards rather than inwards. I think if I want to do creative writing, I'm going to do it on my own as a solitary thing."

Participant, interview (17)

"It did make me look at things in different ways, including trying to draw which I don't normally do – it has increased my creativity and ability to be creative too."

Participant, interview (17)

"It's kept me curious about wanting to do writing even if it's just journaling. If another course came along in whatever context, I would be more likely to try it."

Participant, interview (17)

Two of the three participants who were interviewed also felt that taking part had made them more creative.

Wider Impacts

Two of the three participants interviewed have since gone onto or back to employment and have noticed that taking part in the project has also impacted their work positively:

"At work I'm taking more time to observe what is going on and making notes of this through photography. Recently I led a retreat and found that some of the ideas and themes covered during the course came out through that and I was able to encourage people through their engagement with nature in a similar sort of way."

Participant, interview (17)

"It helped me think more about nature, look at it in different ways and take time with it which I hope will feed into how I interpret that for other people when they ask questions, when (I) am leading walks."

Participant, interview (17)

The skills and mindset these participants gained via the courses they took therefore also have the potential to benefit a wider range of people as they bring this learning into their jobs.

Experience of the Project

During the interviews, the three participants reported that they had really enjoyed the sessions they took part in, especially the nature writing and journaling for wellbeing, finding time for creativity and finding everyday creativity through photography courses.

However, the activities that the interviewees took part in all happened via zoom. For two of the participants, this was challenging, as outlined in the interview analysis, below:

Participant interview findings (17)

One participant spoke about how initially this affected their social anxiety that they already experienced prior to taking part in the course. At first, the individual did not feel comfortable speaking and had their camera turned off as they didn't want to show themselves on screen. However, with time, the individual started to feel more comfortable.

"I was happy to participate like this once I knew it wasn't an issue to the other people, once I explained that's what I felt comfortable with."

One participant who took part in the creative writing activity found that accessing the course on Zoom made it harder for her to engage with others on the course as she had hoped to do.

"It was more difficult than I was expecting in feeling like I belonged to the group."

This participant also went on to explain that they were dyslexic and found it hard generally to follow instructions. They felt that the setting on Zoom made this more challenging and this was another reason it would have been better if this had of been delivered face-to-face.

"It's easier in the moment to say, can you say that again? I find that more difficult on Zoom because you don't know when someone else is going to speak. All those cues are missing."

The main suggestion for improvements for similar courses in the future was to run more of the sessions face to face rather than on Zoom. The project team recognized the difficulty of running such sessions remotely, and towards the end of the project, as restrictions eased, did offer some sessions face to face in Hastings, and these were very well received *(End of project review meeting).*

Sustainability

Whilst one of the participants who was interviewed had continued with their creative practice, the other two participants found this more challenging, as outlined in the interview report excerpt below:

Participant interview findings

The remaining participants had not sustained creative practice. Lack of motivation was the primary reason for this.

"I think I'm one of those people that once something stops, it's gone." (Photography and creative writing courses)

"In the absence of deadlines, I need to impose these on myself a bit more" (Nature journaling course)

It was a suggested across all participants that moving forward perhaps a monthly meeting or catch up would help people to keep their creative practice going.

"Perhaps continuing it more, a once-a-month practice / session – not sure how easy it would be to sustain. She gave us lots of ideas to take forward ourselves, but it might be nice to touch base again." (*Nature journaling course*)

"A monthly thing that people could access to keep this going." (Photography course)

One participant also took part in a one-off session 'Finding time for creativity' which they found to be very enjoyable and with good exercises to encourage them to put their thoughts on paper, however the participant felt that more sessions were needed.

"I think it would have been very good if it had gone on for 2 or 3 sessions more, because you could build on what you learnt in the first session."

This participant also talked about how they still receive a newsletter from the course leader which has helped with its continuation. This includes ideas of creative activities to engage in and contact details for the tutor to remain in touch with. It was felt that this could be something useful to implement for other courses also.

As the furlough schemes comes to an end, the project team are aware of a potential increase in unemployment locally. A proposal for a legacy offer is being produced on offering creative workshops around the county at a number of venues. There is also the potential to create an offer for Job Centre staff who are extremely busy at this time.

Summary

Data available to support the evaluation of this project was limited, and so relied on the qualitative feedback gathered via interviews with three participants to understand their subjective view on the impact to their wellbeing. Whilst this was insightful in understanding the participants relationship with creativity and their experience of the project, it is limited in terms of understanding the effectiveness of this intervention. However, the participants

being interviewed reported that they had all enjoyed taking part and felt that their mental health and wellbeing had improved as a result of taking part, especially in terms of increased confidence and increased mindfulness.

Reflections on the evaluation challenges- by Nick Ewbank

The overall programme can be characterised as a linked series of complex interventions. It had multiple participants, for many of whom motivation and engagement was a challenge and involved several strands of work across a range of forms and approaches. Co-production processes resulted in a diversity of methodologies, and outcomes were difficult to plan for and measure.

The Medical Research Council has published guidance on developing and evaluating complex interventions (18). The guidance includes the following five advice points to be considered in evaluating whether interventions are effective in everyday practice. Reflections on the unfolding of the Everyday Creativity project and its evaluation follow each advice point and may be of use in designing and delivering future projects.

> *1. A good theoretical understanding is needed of how the intervention causes change, so that weak links in the causal chain can be identified and strengthened*

Financial accounting processes and the urgency of the perceived levels of need caused project timelines to become truncated. After initial procurement processes (lasting 4 months), just 6 months was available for the recruitment of delivery partners, planning and project delivery, leading one public health consultant to observe that the timescale was "very tight and restrictive". Future projects of this kind would benefit from an 18 month or two-year timeframe. More time would have permitted the development of a more thorough overarching theory of change for the overall project and logic models for each of the individual elements, linking inputs and planned activity to needs and goals. A more extended planning process would also have allowed for each specific interventions to be more closely linked to specific outcomes and for tailored evaluation methods to be designed and implemented.

> *2. Lack of effect may reflect implementation failure (or teething problems) rather than genuine ineffectiveness; a thorough process evaluation is needed to identify implementation problems*

In a more extended project timeframe, the introduction of ongoing process evaluation would have made a positive contribution, facilitating sharing of best practice between groups (for example, by extending excellent practice in co-production to all groups), addressing recruitment and retention issues including challenges with terminology, modifying approaches that did not fully embed Everyday Creativity processes, and allowing greater comparative analysis of effectiveness of implementation.

> *3. Variability in individual level outcomes may reflect higher level processes; sample sizes may need to be larger to take account of the extra variability and cluster randomised designs considered*

Given the degree of complexity of the interventions a high degree of variability in outcomes was to be expected. Scaling up to increase sample size might not be a realistic option given budgetary constraints but placing a stronger evaluative focus on changes in agency, voice

and behaviours among participants might yield a higher degree of consistency across the disparate groups.

4. *A single primary outcome may not make best use of the data; a range of measures will be needed, and unintended consequences picked up where possible*

The focus on measuring baseline mental wellbeing and psychological functioning (Short Warwick Edinburgh) among participants (particularly through momentary measures) was arguably overly narrow and risked missing more high-level processes such as self-actualization and behaviour change, although, there were attempts to measure these, where appropriate for the client group. In addition, organisational impacts, which were seen as important in the conceptualisation of the project, were not captured systematically from all participants but through focus groups and interviews. There was nevertheless some evidence of improved and sustainable working practices being introduced. For example, co-design innovation was seen in public health; and there has been a shift to more inclusive practice and a greater focus on outcomes among cultural organisations. Significantly there are also plans to embed positive creative activities in care homes across the county, as described in the following extract from a focus group interview:

"We're part of the bigger group [Healthcare Homes] and there's 45 other homes all around the country. Obviously, I've been keeping them informed of what's going on and the progress and they're all very keen. Everyone's very excited about it so we want to branch it off and use it in all the other homes because it works, pure and simple and it's amazing, really."

5. *Ensuring strict standardisation may be inappropriate; the intervention may work better if a specified degree of adaptation to local settings is allowed for in the protocol*

As referred to above, creative approaches and co-production processes are often to a greater or lesser extent incompatible with strictly standardised evaluation methodologies – and this can bring particular challenges in addressing the question "*was the intervention effective?*" in ways that allows for a comparative evaluation against other interventions. However, it is important to recognise that in many of the areas addressed by this project, creative approaches are not in competition with other interventions – they may in fact be the only way to effectively reach target groups. Whilst there are clear opportunities in future projects for creative organisations to learn from the evaluative rigour of public health approaches to measuring changes to wellbeing, there is also room for shared learning and partnership working that continues the development of innovative creative ways of supporting vulnerable people and their local communities to learn to help themselves.

Conclusion

Through a period of COVID-19 related lockdowns and periods when face to face contact was not possible, this programme delivered what it set out to do: creative activity-based projects co-developed by Sussex based creatives and five disparate population groups who were considered to be at greater risk of adverse outcomes before or during the pandemic.

Everyday Creativity was managed by Culture Shift on behalf of ESCC Public Health and the work was approached in a collaborative manner, aiming to increase cross sectoral learning between Public Health, creative organisations or artists, settings, and Culture Shift.

A short film of the Everyday Creativity programme is available on Culture Shift's website.

The primary outcome of interest was an improvement in mental health and wellbeing, but the evaluation was also designed to capture a range of other 'softer' outcomes such as changes in practices, confidence, habits, and attitudes through focus groups.

Five of the seven projects met or exceeded the target number of people to engage directly with. Two projects (which had high targets) struggled to engage with the number of people proposed given the tight timeframes for delivery.

The ability to robustly evaluate the effectiveness of these creative activity interventions on participant mental health and wellbeing was compromised by the limited number of participants' willing and able to engage with the validated tools used for quantitative data collection. This led to reliance on the qualitative data to understand the participant's subjective view on the impact of the project on their wellbeing. This qualitative data was largely positive with participants reporting improved mood, increased ability to focus, and connection to others. However, the representativeness of this data may be limited as participants who chose to be involved in focus groups/interviews may not necessarily be representative of the wider project groups.

In term of participant experience, the majority of feedback from participants regarding their experience of being involved was very positive. However, some participants and creative artists felt that the remote delivery of much of the projects was a barrier, in terms of the ability to make meaningful connections to others, as well as due to technical issues. Although over time many technical issues were ironed out, allowing activities to go ahead, online would not be a first choice for delivery outside of a pandemic.

Additionally, some participants had a perception that creative activities are not for everyone or for people like them. This view may well have affected uptake of the projects. Further work may be needed to understand how to encourage people who don't think of themselves as creative to try out creative activities.

This programme and the evaluation process has provided substantial learning for the Public Health team as a result of working with creative partners, something that we have not done before: notably re examples from the creative teams of good practice in co-design of interventions and skilled use of remote working tools to build communities.

The evaluation process for this programme has highlighted the difference between the approaches traditionally considered robust by public health teams in terms of types and

amount of data collected as evidence compared to approaches used by some practitioners in the creative sector.

An area where the Public Health team can perhaps support some creative partners more is in ensuring a comprehension of the importance of collecting outcome data, and the type of data required to evidence an impact and support future funding or commissioning. However, we also recognise the need for public health to identify and become familiar with a wider range of evaluation techniques and to become more adept at tailoring the evaluation tools and methods to each individual project and to work more closely with each project lead during the design and delivery of the project to increase the acceptability and likely take up of these tools. There are potentially opportunities to work with academic partners to develop our understanding and use of evaluation techniques in this field.

The final piece of learning from the programme is that the commissioning timescales were unrealistic in terms of the scale of the ambition to co-develop and embed creative practices as well as appropriate evaluation methods suited to the individual interventions.

However, despite the significant challenges of the pandemic, on top of the challenging timescales, the creatives produced some high-quality resources and activities which were well received and which we hope will continue to be used beyond the end of the programme.

The partnership with Culture Shift was fundamental in enabling the project to happen, and in demonstrating the potential for creativity to be used to   support public health aims.   As a result of this programme, the Public Health team will continue to explore using creativity and building partnerships with   creatives, organisations, and academics in East Sussex.

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