

Creative Connections EVALUATION

FEBRUARY 2020

ARTLINK HULL



Table of Contents

<i>Project Aims</i>	3
<i>About Creative Connections</i>	4
<i>Evaluation Framework</i>	5
<i>Baseline Data Summary</i>	6
Wellbeing STAR	6
Arts Engagement	7
<i>Key Findings</i>	9
Challenges	9
Successes	10
Recommendations and Next Steps	13
Participant Voice	14
Photo Documentation	17
<i>About Artlink Hull</i>	23
<i>Partner Organisations</i>	23
Danny's Dream	23
Victoria House	23
Sight Support	24
<i>Artists</i>	24
Gail Hurst	24
Jon Keen	24
Sarah Johnson	24
<i>Funders</i>	24



Project Aims

"After being quite isolated for a number of years due to many factors, it has given me back my faith in people again" Participant

- To understand how creativity and social wellbeing of service users can be supported by placing an artist in a disabled social centre.
- To understand how establishing groups using creative activities can help people to develop skills, increase confidence, grow friendships and combat isolation.
- To demonstrate how people can be supported to develop their own creative identities when they've had little or no previous access to creative activities.
- To assess how artists working in this setting can develop their approach, and how the work created can influence wider society and the creative sector.
- To evaluate if and how creative communities develop within social centres as a result of the Creative Connections project.

About Creative Connections

Creative Connections delivered 90 participatory art workshops across three specialist disability centres over 30 weeks; Danny's Dream, Sight Support and Victoria House. This included two collaborative sessions between the centres which aimed to increase social cohesion. Artlink Hull commissioned three local artists who were each assigned to work with a centre; Sarah Johnson worked with 'Sight Support' a visually impaired group; Gail Hurst with 'Danny's Dream' who support disabled and vulnerable children and adults; and Jon Keen with 'Victoria House' a residential unit supporting people with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, arthritis, multiple sclerosis and disabilities resulting from accidents or stroke.

The programme framework involved weekly sessions between the participants, their support workers and the artists. Each group met at their community venue or residential home, creating opportunities for the groups to meet, socialise and make together. The project focussed on developing new inclusive creative social groups within disability centres, providing stimulating and inspiring activity in which the participants can grow personally and as communities. This not only intended to remove barriers to engaging with and creating art, but also to help develop friendships, increase confidence and personal agency and reduce social isolation, ultimately improving participants' health and wellbeing. The project culminated in an exhibition of their work 'Creative Connections' the exhibition in Artlink Hull's gallery showcasing their talent, and further helping to increase pride and confidence.



Evaluation Framework

Project Evaluator Dr Jade French met with Artlink Hull staff, artists and partner organisations at the beginning of the project on 27th February 2019. This presented an opportunity to build relationships, to establish shared impact measures and to understand the differing access needs of stakeholders and participants in order to design a bespoke evaluation framework. While the breadth of diversity is considered a clear strength of this project, a challenge experienced was developing an evaluation framework that includes and empowers a cohort of participants with extremely diverse access needs. This resulted in creating a multi-method framework that including the production of a film in order to ensure that the participant’s voice was captured and represented.

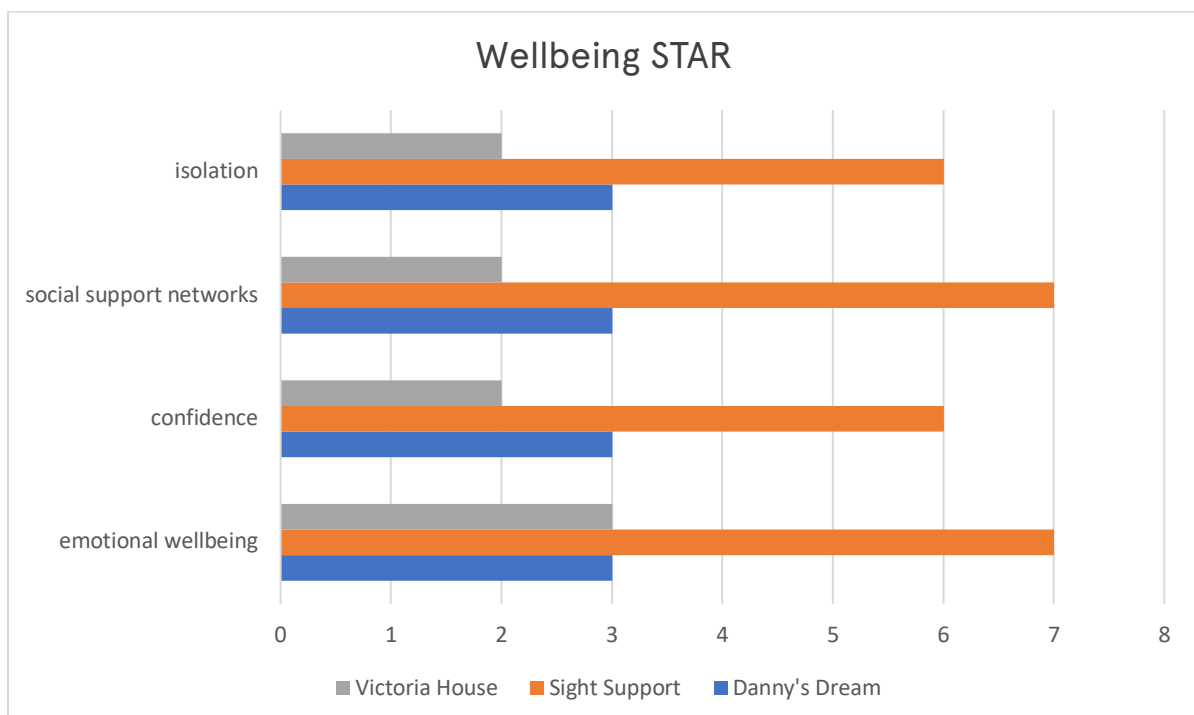
Methodology	
Baseline Project Survey	Written survey undertaken by participants to gather baseline of data. This aimed to capture baseline data to measure impact against, including: name, age, date joined project, personal description of their disability and support needs, postcode of home address (first half only), how else do the participants engage with art outside of Artlink Hull provision, barriers to arts participation (tick boxes and open box response), and Wellbeing STAR (tool to measure wellbeing).
Artist Logs	Artist logs were simple forms designed to support the artists to record key data from each workshop efficiently. This data was gathered to shed light onto the experience of artists and participants as the project developed. The artist log included; Name of artist, date and location of workshop, register of attendance: artists, participants, support, 100-word summary of workshop, Key moments in bullet points – turning points, important observations and 3-5 pieces of supporting media to illustrate key moments such as photos, film clips, sound clips etc.
Film	A short film was produced by Thinking Films who specialise in community-led productions. Due to the communicative diversity of the participants, film was employed as a research methodology to capture participant voice using a combination of sound, moving image and text.

Baseline Data Summary

<p>90</p> <p>workshops delivered</p>	<p>823</p> <p>individual participations</p>	<p>Physical</p> <p>access cited as primary barrier to art</p>
<p>56</p> <p>average age</p>	<p>110</p> <p>hours of volunteer time</p>	<p>63</p> <p>pieces of artworks exhibited</p>

Wellbeing STAR

The graph below reveals the average wellbeing score gathered via a Wellbeing STAR completed by each participant at the beginning of the project. The data indicates that participants from Victoria House felt more isolated, less confident and social than those from Sight Support or Danny’s Dream. This could be due to a number of factors, but notably, Victoria House is the only residential care facility out of the three partner organisations and it is well documented (see 2016 Mencap report ‘Stuck at Home’ for example) that people living in care facilities face more challenges to wellbeing.



Arts Engagement

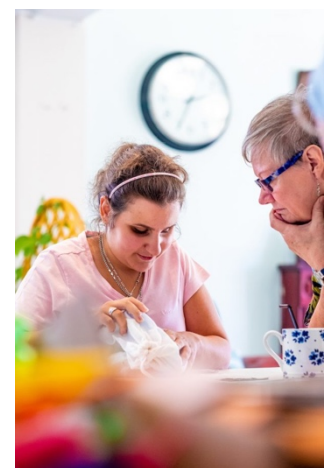
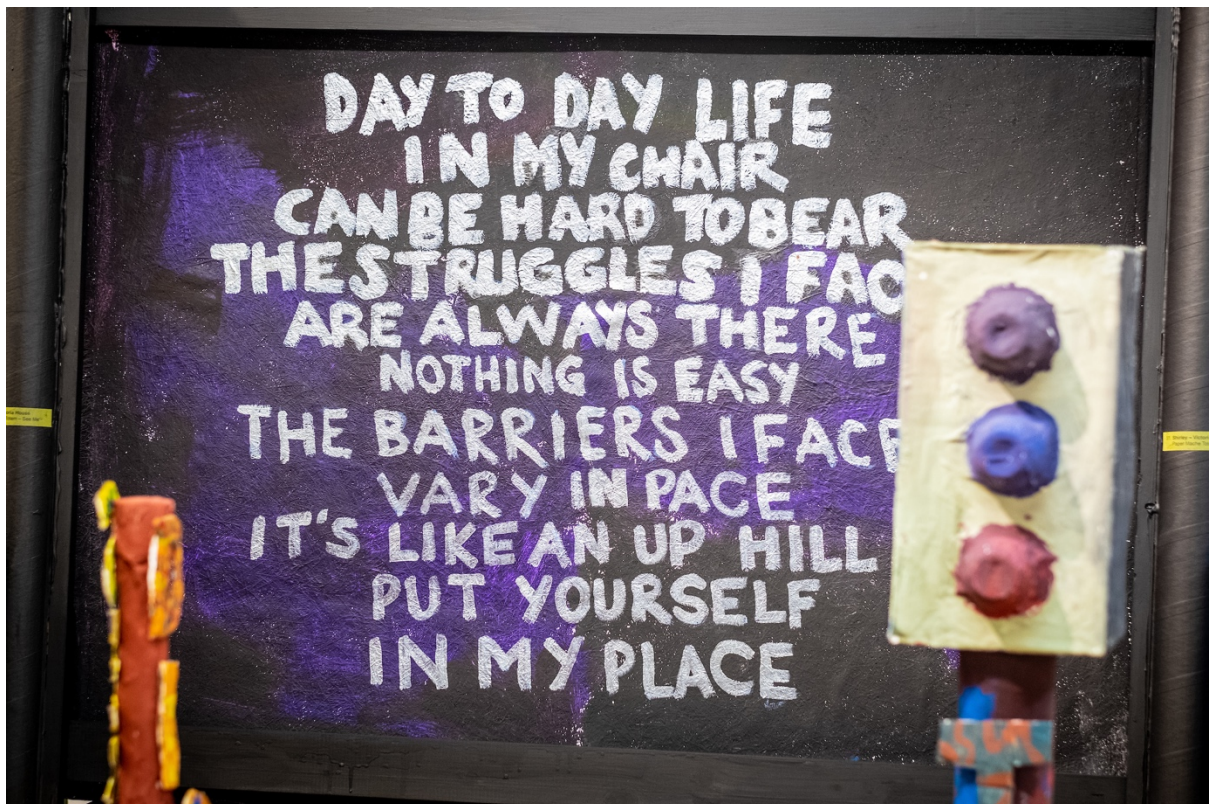
Participants were asked about their engagement with the arts; where they visit and what activities they do. The data on the following page indicates that overwhelmingly, participants engagement with arts prior to this project was low, particularly in regard to making artwork. Common reasons cited in the survey;

"physical and social support"

"physical barriers and lack of knowledge about where to access art"

"unable to access the community"

"transport that is accessible"



Other than events or exhibitions run by Artlink, have you visited any arts events or exhibitions in the last 12 months



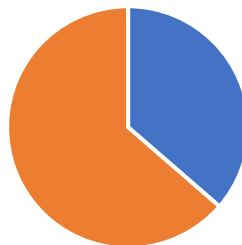
■ Yes (9) ■ No (24)

Other than projects run by Artlink, have you taken part in any creative workshops over the last 12 months?



■ Yes (5) ■ No (28)

Other than projects run by Artlink, have you created any art over the past 12 months?



■ Yes (12) ■ No (21)



Key Findings

Challenges

Group Delivery Some artists expressed challenges in delivering group activities to participants with wide ranging complex impairments. One-to-one support was often needed for some participants to fully engage, develop their skills and individual artistic practice, yet this was challenging when the majority of the group needed such support. This was tackled by artists delivering group activity to those more able and then dividing their time between those who required additional help. Artists also actively encouraged collaboration and peer support where possible; this appeared to work well but may not offer a sustainable model of practice. When challenges were raised with staff, Artlink Hull introduced a pool of volunteers via Artlink Hull and Sight support who supported busier activities. Moving forward, staff expressed ambition to introduce paid workshop assistants which would also provide crucial training pathways for emerging artists.

"there were requests for basic tuition in "how to draw and paint" – this will be quite challenging for me as so many need near one to one support. I resolve to go with these requests initially but try to encourage less reliance on traditional forms of art as I feel that some of the participants will find these less rewarding in terms of developing self-reliance." Artist

"more assistance is needed and I have asked for more help" Artist

"I found listening and concentration on the part of the participants was very varied... More 1 to 1 may address this but I then had to explain to people about being patient whilst waiting for attention." Artist

"We were so pleased with the big uptake with this project, however it's certainly flagged the need to build in assistant roles for some of the groups" Staff member

Shared organisational workshops In addition to the weekly workshops at each centre, the project also facilitated two shared organisational workshops where the three centres were brought together and participants engaged in creative activities accessible to all groups. The aim was to promote social connections across the centres and enable participants from each of the sites to network and share experiences in order to generate a deeper insight into access barriers to art across Hull. However, while participants enjoyed the opportunity to make art, there was less understanding evident as to why the groups had been brought together. The ambition of shared workshops did not fully transpire, reflected in the following comment;

"My one criticism of the project would be the idea of linking with other 'disabled' people (the two other groups who took part in the project). It seemed irrelevant to me and a little demeaning to be all put together for sessions, I don't need to spend time with people just because they are 'disabled' too." Participant

Participants and staff alike expressed that using this time for artist development shaped by the participants would have been more beneficial than the shared organisational workshops;

"In the future I would work towards enrichment activities for groups such as visits to galleries or other external venues which would have impact on the personal creative development of participants" Staff member

Successes

Staff and Carer Engagement The artists are clearly experienced in workshop facilitation. The workshops delivered were of a high quality and the artists understood the value of having staff and carers based at the partner organisations involved in the workshops. For example, over the course of the programme the artists were able to 'cascade' arts making pedagogies to staff and carers, creating the foundations for sustainable working, and the potential for new training opportunities demonstrating a legacy to this project.

"At first [the participants] carer was kindly cutting out the images for her to then stick in place. After a while I encouraged Sophie to tear her chosen pieces. I helped her initially but after a while she was totally engrossed in the task herself. Sophie's squeals of delight as she tore the paper and her laughter throughout was very uplifting." Artist

"[the participants] carer felt she was having a really happy day and went on to say 'I like the way the workshop is all inclusive for the participants'" Artist

"The carers are really enjoying joining in with the workshops; I feel more and more. They are having a go themselves with some of the techniques which is encouraging the participants to become more confident and independent. This is also helping to create a more inclusive atmosphere in the workshop with lots of chat, banter and laughs between us all." Artist

Artistic Opportunity The project succeeded in its aim to enable more people who had previous little opportunity to be artists to create work on a regular basis. It reached out to the intended audience and engaged them successfully and it is clearly evident from both the artist logs and participant feedback that there is an appetite to continue this work. Furthermore, there were some changes evident in participant's attitudes towards making art. Many of the participants at the beginning of the project had traditional views on what an arts practice is (e.g. painting and drawing) and were often focussed on 'doing it right' evident in requesting formal 'tuition' from artists. However, over time participants became more interested in creative experimentation, mark making and exploration of materials which is further reflected in the final exhibited works.

"Group was being so much more inventive in their approaches and willing for experiments not to be failures but part of the process or happy accidents." Artist

"I have been inspired to buy myself art materials and practice at home and then I decorated my own bathroom with a wall mural" Participant to artist

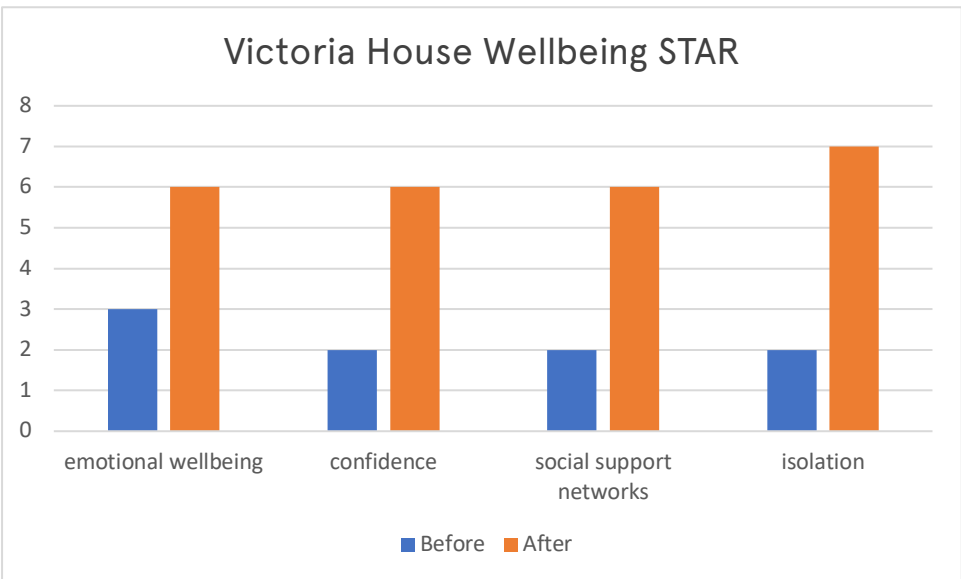
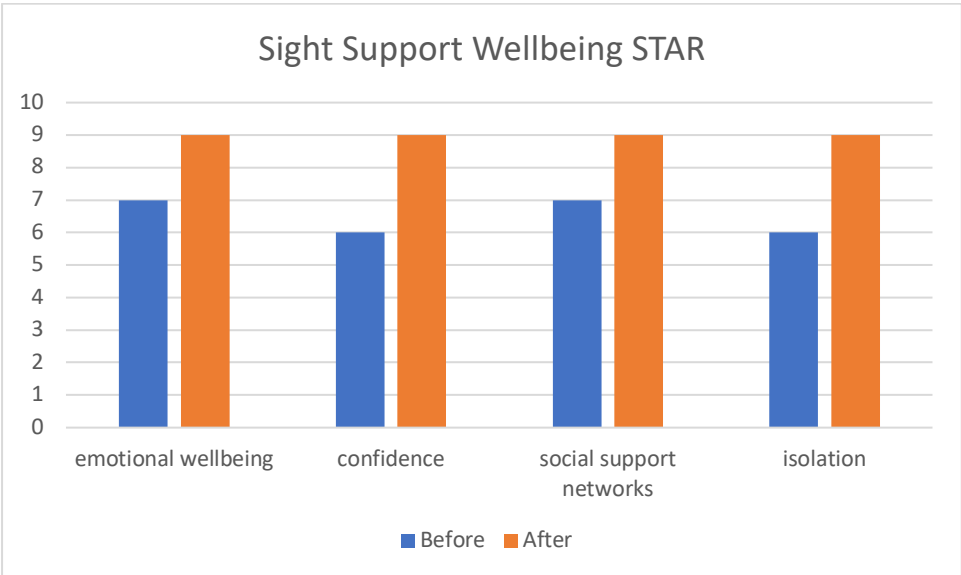
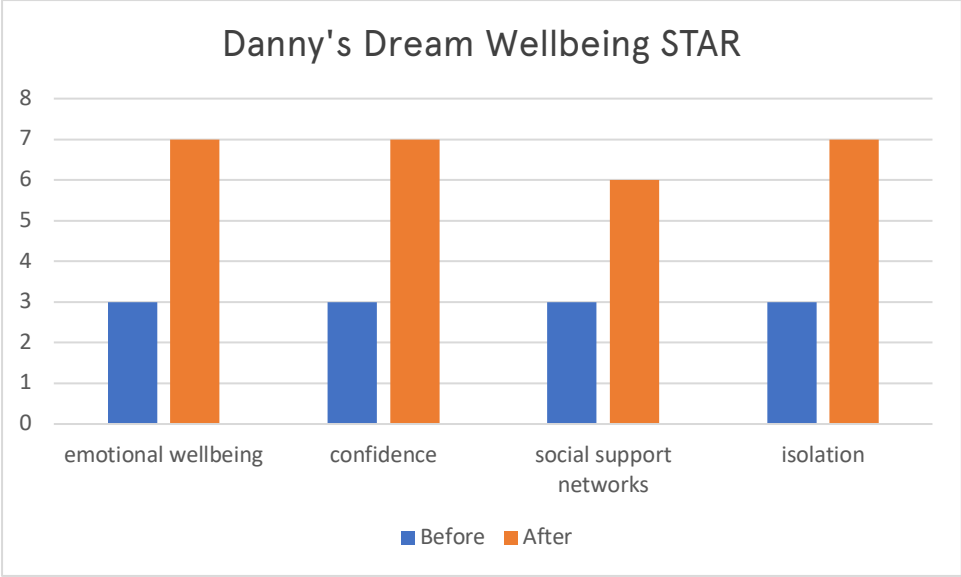
"when I was at school I was told I can't really go very far in art due to having no vision, so stopped making things until I began to go to the art group this year. At first I was nervous and cautious about my work, but I am slowly getting my confidence back to use my imagination through attending regularly. I almost feel like a different person" Participant

Fostering Wellbeing The project excelled in one of its key aims of using arts engagement to foster wellbeing by improving confidence, reducing isolation and facilitating social networks. This success has been mirrored across the UK in studies such as Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing (2017). This report which followed a two-year inquiry, found that the arts can help keep us well, aid recovery and support longer lives, better lived. The arts also help meet challenges in health and social care associated with ageing, loneliness, long-term conditions and mental health. Crucially they can also help save the care sector money. Changes in wellbeing were monitored through artist logs, interviews with participants and Wellbeing STAR at the beginning and end of the project;

"carer informed me that SD's mum has placed her papier mâché bowl in pride of place on the fireplace as she loves it!" Artist

"The lack of confidence is a bigger hurdle than their sight barriers in my opinion" Artist

"I was so distracted today, trying to build the wheels, I realised I had not taken note of the progress the guys had made. Then I realised what a massive moment this is. I was able set them up painting their Totems and leave them to their own devices while I made the wheels and I felt so proud. They have all become so confident they didn't really need me." Artist



Recommendations and Next Steps

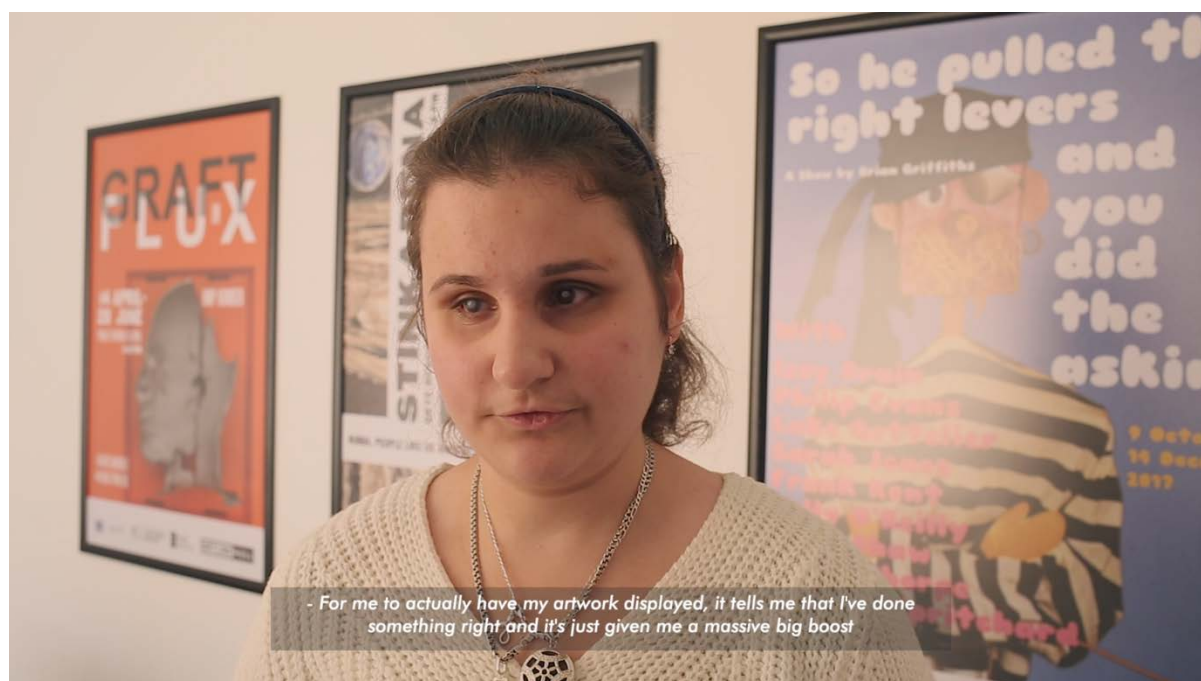
- This project was successful in terms of addressing its core aim of improving the wellbeing of participants, however the Wellbeing STAR method of evaluation posed some challenges to groups and individuals. The Wellbeing STAR required more of an explanation of how it would work.

Moving forward, the Wellbeing STAR needs to be developed in order to be more usable for the participants. The language used needs to be more project specific, as some participants confused its meaning. It is recommended that Artlink Hull approach work with participants to develop the wording of the star and a set of instructions. Alternatively, Artlink Hull could develop other more accessible ways for participants to map their personal changes in wellbeing. Early ideas include photovoice.

- This evaluation revealed there would be a benefit to introducing an artist assistant role in order to scale up the project. This would help take pressure from lead artists in terms of support in the room, administration as well as building in evaluation more robustly in sessions. This assistant role would also provide an entry pathway for artists in Hull to gain experience of working in community and participatory arts settings.
- Transforming the shared organisational workshops into enrichment opportunities, shaped by each group's specific needs and interests. This would provide space for artists to be more responsive to each of the group's diverse needs and ambitions.
- This project ran across 12 months. Moving forward, longer more sustained engagements will enable Artlink Hull and partner organisations to monitor and support the long-term impact on participants.



Participant Voice



Film A short film was commissioned as part of this evaluation which was produced by Thinking Film [www.thinkingfilm.co.uk] who specialise in community-led productions. Thinking Film exists to provide people with a voice. From concept to creation, telling stories that challenge the way people see the world, providing creative solutions enabling organisations to communicate their message more effectively. Due to the communicative diversity of the participants, film was employed as a research methodology to capture participant voice using a combination of sound, moving image and text. The film was shot across one day with Thinking Film director Danny Killbride to coincide exhibitions opening on Wednesday 4th of December.

Watch the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0ubNfm3Y-0&t=>

Case Study The following case study is intended to give an in depth insight into the impact of this project through spotlighting the experiences of one participant known as 'K'.

Participant Summary

K is 46 years old and moved to Hull in January 2019. She is a full time carer for her 12 year old son and decided to get involved with the Creative Connections project in order to have "somewhere to go each Wednesday that gives me respite". K is also visually impaired. She has been involved with partner organisation Sight Support since 2019 and accessed this project through their 'SocialEyes' strand. K participated in all 30 weeks of the project and exhibited her artwork in the project's exhibition 'Creative Connections' in Artlink Hull's gallery during December 2019 – March 2020.

Impact on Wellbeing

When beginning this project, K had only recently moved back to Hull with her son after a long period of time away and “didn't really know anyone” in the city. As a full-time carer for her child, such intense caring roles can understandably take a toll on a person’s mental health and wellbeing and further enhance feelings of isolation. A survey conducted by charity Carers UK with 3400 carers, for instance, revealed that an overwhelming 87% of carers had experienced mental health challenges and decreased feelings of wellbeing. Furthermore, the RNIB’s ‘Facing Blindness Alone’ campaign has highlighted the issue of social isolation in relation specifically to people with a visual impairment and that there is now clear evidence that loneliness has a detrimental impact on both mental and physical health. K, and people with circumstances like her, are therefore at high risk of feeling isolated and consequently experience feelings of poor mental health. K therefore began seeking out opportunities to connect with other people and feel like an “individual again”. The Creative Connections project provided a free, weekly opportunity for K to go into the community in order to meet new people through creating art, which in K’s words has been a “lifesaver for my mental health.” K explains further;

“I enjoy each week’s 2 hour session so much, it has given me something to look forward to, which has been great when having a difficult week with my son. As someone who has had a difficult time over the last few years it has gotten me out of my little bubble and I have started to enjoy other people’s company much more than I did at the beginning of the year. This has had a knock on effect on my happiness levels.”

“After being quite isolated for a number of years due to many factors, it has given me back my faith in people again. I would be so sad if the project was to not run again, it is a real lifeline for me. I think it has saved me from a year of depression and isolation.”

Creating Peer Networks

Before this project, K didn’t have many friends, family or acquaintances who are also visually impaired. Research tells us that making new friends can be harder for people with disabilities and visual impairments, and that peer support networks, however informal, are vital in fostering enhanced communication, confidence and developing applied specialist knowledge that is derived from their lived experience. Given the finding that the majority of people with a visual impairment rely primarily on their own personal resources rather than on external support to cope with sight loss, peer support can serve a vital function in helping to develop and reinforce those resources (Lee and Brennan, 2006). K reflected that this project;

"has also given me insight into how other people cope with their sight loss. This has really helped me in terms of how I view my sight loss and possible future blindness. Blindness isn't something I fear but it does help to be around others who also face similar issues."

"I have definitely made some lovely positive relationships because of this project. I value very highly the relationships I have formed with a number of people over the course of the project. I can't think how I would have gotten to know them if were not for this particular project."

Impact on Creative Practice

Prior to this project, K had felt like she had lost touch with her creative side and as a result had not engaged with any artmaking in a long time. The pressures of being a full time carer had taken up much of K's time. During the project, K "rediscovered" her "artistic side". She praised the support of the project staff in encouraging this change. K painted her favourite place in Hull, developed new drawing and illustration skills, expanded her practice into sculpture using clay, created collages of her guide dog and used her creative practice to examine personal themes of "journey and home".

"I have re-found my love of drawing/painting/crafty pursuits, something I had given up on as my sight deteriorated. I am now pursuing more arty projects at home now."

"I have loved the fun atmosphere of the group - created by the other participants and the kind people who run and volunteer at the project, and I have also loved the creative outlet it has given me. I have also enjoyed the sense of achievement of creating things each week."

"I have gotten interested in art/crafts again. I have rediscovered my love of creative pursuits. I also love how everyone has had fun no matter their levels of skill or ability"

Thinking of the Future

K was very sad to see the project conclude and enthusiastically supports its continuation. K expressed how she was keen to maintain the social element that the project facilitated as well as a renewed interest in being an artist.

"I would like it to be a sustainable art project that is always around, not just for the length of a specific projects timescale."

"The Artlink project leaders have given me the idea to develop some children's books with simple picture stories of my guide dog. I love this idea and would love to pursue it."

"To continue to regularly attend the art group and continue to be inspired and keep being creative, which is not always easy to do on your own at home."

Photo Documentation

A section of images collected by the artists and participants during the workshops, sharing the process of collaborating and making that underpinned the programme.

Victoria House



Danny's Dream



Sight Support



The Exhibition

Photos taken by Jerome Whittingham Photomoments







About Artlink Hull

Artlink Hull was established in 1982 as a key member of the Shape Network, working across Lincolnshire and Humberside and focusing on disability arts workshops, performances, special projects, training, information and advice. Later in 1992 the organisation was redefined as an Arts Access Agency working with all sections of the community and across all art forms, whilst focusing delivery in the Humberside region. In 2007 after being in a range of bases over the years, Artlink Hull moved into its current site. In 2017, Hull's year as UK City of Culture, Artlink Hull delivered the major Square Peg disability and diversity arts programme. Artlink Hull has continuously evolved and grown since then, responding and adapting to an ever-changing cultural field whilst remaining true to its core values of exploring art and community. Artlink Hull enables the creation and exploration of art with, in, and about communities. In particular, it works with individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage to increase the diversity of voices in the arts. This is done through art commissions, projects, exhibitions, events, learning programmes, and forums, working with a range of communities. Since its establishment in 1982, Artlink Hull has been continually involved in the development of community, participatory and socially-engaged art practices, and remains a key organisation in the Humber region within these fields.

Partner Organisations

Danny's Dream

Danny's Dream is a unique domiciliary care agency owned by the Goodwin Development Trust Limited. The agency is located close to local amenities with easy access to public transport and offers a combination of domiciliary care and social support primarily to people who have learning disabilities and/or complex health needs. The Danny's Dream Club has accessible toilet/shower facilities, therapy/gym rooms, two large activity areas, an enclosed courtyard, a kitchen and two large activity rooms.

Victoria House

Located in Hull, Victoria House is a purpose built centre providing accommodation and support for people with complex and high dependency needs, providing independence and lifestyle choices for adults with physical disabilities. Victoria House supports people with a range of disabilities including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida and arthritis, multiple sclerosis and disabilities resulting from accidents or a stroke.

Sight Support

Sight Support is a UK registered charity which provides support for people with sight loss in Hull and the East Riding. Its mission is to improve and enrich the quality of life for local people at any and all stages of sight loss, through the provision of a wide range of support services, enabling them to reach their full potential and lead independent lives. Sight Support currently supports more than 2,300 local people with a range of visual impairments and work closely in partnership with local authorities, other local charities and a variety of support groups to provide the most appropriate support to suit each individual's specific needs.

Artists

Gail Hurst a visual artist and mixed media sculptor who studied at the Hull School of Art and Design and is now working in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Her work has been exhibited at the Feren's Art Gallery, the Hull Minster, Burton Constable Hall Orangery and many venues in Hull. Her current work is a prize winning life size sculpture of Michelangelo exhibited in the Hull Minster. With a background in education Gail is also a socially engaged arts practitioner delivering art workshops in the local community.

Jon Keen creates work based on ideas of choice and consequence, mapping these notions through a maze motif. He uses paint as a form of therapy to resolve or plan a way through personal, political and other issues. Recently Jon has develop his work through new cardboard brick sculptures. They represent a space that can contain his ideas of choice and consequence, the working through of issues. Jon is Artist in residence at the local Youth Justice service and has run workshops across the city. Working as a bespoke picture framer and gallery technician alongside developing his own body of work.

Sarah Johnson is a visual artist who works as a sculptor and teacher of ceramics, textiles and mixed media. She is a community artist working both collaboratively and individually on projects and commissions. Sarah is researching art and craft as social isolation, mental health and disability therapy with numerous groups in her practice. Community inclusion and sustainability in materials and practice are fundamentals for her with an aim to encourage and empower people.

Funders

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of;

