

Evaluation of Artswork Mental Health Partnership

Final Report

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1. Background and aims

The Artwork Mental Health Partnership (MHP) was created to use the arts and creativity as a vehicle to promote wellbeing in children and young people (CYP), particularly those in marginalised or disadvantaged communities.

The MHP involves a group of arts-based programmes commissioned in five geographical areas: East Kent, West Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Oxford, and Reading. Within each of these regions, there are multiple projects covering a wide range of creative approaches and interventions aimed at young people with a wide range of characteristics and needs. This includes:

- variation in terms of **demographic dimensions**, such as different ethnic groups and ages (ranging from primary to post-16, ages 9 to 24), as well as levels of deprivation in the community;
- variation in **the kinds of creative arts opportunities** offered to young people (e.g., puppetry, music making, physical theatre, cultural visits, performance, film making);
- variation in terms of the **universal vs. targeted nature of the work**, in relation to levels of adversity and risk (e.g., targeted work aimed at young people who are self-harming and/or at risk of suicide, in comparison with universal provision at key educational transitions);
- variation in terms of focusing only on **direct delivery of work with young people vs. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision** and support for mental health awareness among school staff;
- variation in **delivery methods and timescale**, including one-off sessions, short series of sessions, and projects running over a longer timeframe;
- variation in the **settings for the delivery of creative activities**, including some based in schools and some based in other community settings.

The projects were commissioned with the expectation that these may demonstrate impacts in terms of benefits for the mental health and wellbeing of CYP, particularly those who are socially excluded, marginalised, or deprived.

Our evaluation study was developed with three overarching aims:

1. To assess the impacts of the programmes as a whole on young people's mental health and wellbeing.
2. To identify the key psychological mechanisms of any such impacts.
3. To establish the facilitators of – and obstacles to – positive effects. These were expected to include features of the creative arts environments and/or practical details in the delivery of the projects.

After a listing of the various programmes and projects involved in the MHP, a brief summary of the conceptual and methodological approaches taken to the evaluation is presented, before turning to the key results from the different strands of evaluation work.

2. Programmes and projects

As noted above, the Artswork Mental Health Partnership involved five geographical areas, each with an extremely diverse range of creative arts projects and activities. These are detailed below, including those that are still in development and those that did not generate evaluation data analysed for this report.

East Kent, Flux programme

- Project 1: Community Arts Kent. A series of 5/6 weekly sessions with an overall aim to create a zine / protest banners relating to topics the group are interested in talking about. Fifteen sessions were delivered by a practitioner and facilitated by Youth Workers for 14-year-olds at the different Youth Groups. Fifteen young people took part between March and October 2022.
- Project 2a: Gulbenkian. A long-running weekly drama group for young refugees and asylum seekers exploring drama techniques as a tool to improve wellbeing. Delivered by practitioners for a fluid group of young people aged 14-25 years that began in April 2022 and is ongoing.
- Project 2b: Gulbenkian. Two October 2022 half-term groups, based around comedy/improv for people with experience of self-harm.
- Project 3a: Ideas Test at Victory Academy secondary school. Weekly music sessions ran during the Summer 2022 and Autumn 2022 terms to celebrate musical culture and increase trust for services for Slovak/Roma students. Seventeen young people aged 14-16 years took part.
- Project 3b: Ideas Test at William Adams PRU. Weekly CPD from theatre practitioners for teachers to deliver a workshop which included recorded feedback from practitioners to encourage young people to recognise own capabilities and to develop positive relationships. Eight Year 10 and 11 students at risk of permanent exclusion took part during the Autumn 2022 term.
- Project 4: Living Words – Living Warriors. A series of five sessions plus a drop-in for 18- to 25-year-old cohorts of LGBTQIA+ people who have thoughts/experiences of self-harm to create word-based pieces working one to one using the ‘listen out loud’ methodology. Twenty-six people took part between April and November 2022.
- Project 5: Beats by Girlz. Series of weekly music production sessions with 14-year-old young carers to create their own music. Project began in November 2022 and is ongoing.
- Project 6: The Big Schools Project involved 139 primary and secondary pupils in various creative school-based activities over three one-off day sessions during the Autumn 2022 term.
- Project 7: FLUX Fest. Celebratory event in December 2022 to bring all the projects and participants together to take part in each other’s workshops and to see each other’s performances. In all, approximately 100-120 people attended.
- Project 9: two recent projects are currently running weekly in two Youth Hubs for 14- to 25-year-olds (ongoing).

Projects 1 to 5 generated quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation data analysed for this report.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Supporting Young Minds programme

- Strand 1, Project 1: Independent Arts, Sandown place-based commission. Youth Panel co-produced place-based arts project with the aim of supporting young people's mental wellbeing by increasing physical activity and young people's engagement with the Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status through creativity. Community Action Youth Panel commissioned a film-maker to work with the young people, facilitated by Youth Workers, to co-create a documentary about public spaces for CYP to safely gather, and screened it to a range of key stakeholders. Core group of approximately nine 14- to 15-year-olds took part from October 2022 to February 2023.
- Strand 1, Project 2: Independent Arts, Newport. Youth Panel commissioned a muralist to work with them to improve unwelcoming spaces and create an art trail around the town. A core group of six 13- to 17-year-olds met weekly from August 2022 to February 2023.
- Strand 1, Project 3: A further group was formed for CYP who could not engage in co-production who joined a 'Reconnect' group of 13- to 16-year-olds to work towards Arts Award. Nine young people took part in 11 sessions from October 2022 to January 2023.
- Strand 1, Project 4: Independent Arts, Ryde. Young Creatives commissioned a land-based artist to work with them to run a 'Discover Arts Award Day' in Ryde. The project started in February 2023 and is ongoing.
- Strand 1, Project 5: Independent Arts, Ventnor. Young Creatives commissioned a local artist to run a 'pop-up' creative space. The project started in February 2023 and is ongoing.
- Strand 2, Project 1: CPD for Creative Practitioners delivered by Mental Health practitioners (December 2022) and CPD for Mental Health practitioners delivered by Creative Practitioners (March 2023) for approximately 24 adults working with young people.
- Strand 3, Project 1: PRU resources. A programme focused on creating resources by young people, for young people. This project is still in development.
- Strand 3, Project 2: YOT resources. Six young people aged 13-18 years will continue the project started in Newport as part of their reparative work in the community. The project started in February 2023 and is ongoing.
- Strand 3, Project 3: Young Creatives working with two artists to create resources for a) mental health sign-posting, b) creative opportunities for young people. This project is being delivered in March 2023.

Strand 1 Project 1, Strand 1 Project 2, and Strand 2 Project 1 generated quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation data analysed in this report.

Oxford, Feeling Safe programme

- Strand 1a: Art Bytes. Visual artists in school for 2 whole day workshops plus online exhibition/competition, cultural visit and CPD for teachers. Ten schools engaged 349 primary and secondary students, in Year 5 or Year 9 (22-60 students in each) from January to July 2022 and 84 staff through CPD from May to October 2022.
- Strand 1b: World Reimagined partnership with Modern Art Oxford. Art education programme that seeks to tackle racial injustice through learning programmes that embed into the curriculum. Created globes with artists and trained teachers as part of art trail and touring art show. Five groups (3 primary schools and 2 community groups) of 146 young people aged 11-15 years and teachers took part, with a film screening at celebration event planned for 29 March 2023.
- Strand 1c: Creative Futures (Career Fair). Interactive conference delivered by artists and cultural organisations. Three groups (2 x secondary and 1 x work experience) engaged 58 young people aged 13-15 years and 9 teachers.
- Strand 2a: Art Partners. Partner organisations were matched with schools or youth groups to co-create programmes. Ten projects ran (e.g., theatre, artists, opera, weaving, parkour, film, dance, music), delivering 79 sessions for total of 2770 young people and 58 teachers / youth workers.
- Strand 2b: Training. Mental Health Awareness, Mental Health First Aid, Arts for Wellbeing CPD for teachers and artists/art organisations, plus bespoke training about delivering for SEN groups. A total of 28 courses ran, with 40 sessions engaging 159 adults, plus Arts Award training across the year.
- Strand 3a: Sharing Best Practice. Cherwell Theatre Company delivered mental health workshops and interactive performances over sessions in 19 schools, with 1186 young people and 38 adults involved.
- Strand 3b: Public Art. Bespoke workshops in Graffiti and Street Art took place with 60 primary school students in Years 5 and 6 in one school.

All three strands of work generated quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation data analysed in this report.

Reading, Children and Young People Wellbeing programme

- Strand 1: Summer Holiday activities. Seven projects ran that ranged from one day workshops to whole week programmes (e.g., music, theatre, eco/ global development) for 6- to 11-year-olds and 11- to 18-year-olds. The activities were designed to respond to 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'.
- Strand 2: Partnership with RABBLE theatre and Making/Sense Theatre 1. Theatre based, small-group learning opportunity for eight children in Years 3-6 with SEMH needs who were not engaging with school. They received weekly half-day targeted provision for 18 months (October 2022 to July 2023), and staff training was provided.
- Strand 2: Partnership with RABBLE theatre and Making/Sense Theatre 2. Ten young people aged 12-18 from a range of local secondary schools who are missing education for SEMH concerns attended weekly theatre provision at a community centre as an alternative provision (January - July 2023).
- Strand 3: Partnership with Dance Reading 1. A total of 20 young people aged 11-18 with SEMH needs who may not gain GCSEs necessary for professional dance training attended weekly dance group and professional performances to achieve a qualification, namely the Gold Arts Award (September 2022 to November 2023).
- Strand 3: Partnership with Dance Reading 2. A total of 10 young people aged 11-16 from one Academy who had an interest in creative subjects but struggled in class attended weekly after-school dance workshops (January - July 2023).
- Strand 3: Partnership with Dance Reading 3. One-off workshops for 190 primary school students and 340 secondary school students in November 2022.
- Strand 4: Reading Football Club Community Trust 1. A total of 150-200 young people aged 16-18 years received 3 creative sessions at Reading Alternative Provision, hosted by the Community Trust (rolling programme November 2022 to July 2023).
- Strand 4: Reading Football Club Community Trust 2. Joint Programme with the Premier League for young people aged 8 to improve social inclusion through the appeal of football, with 20 young people engaged to date (November 2022 to July 2023).
- Strand 5: Training for all. Five specialist organisations selected to provide training to up-skill arts organisations and schools (e.g., trauma informed approach in creative spaces; benefits of play) plus online mental health workshops and safeguarding training, supervision and ad-hoc training around challenges arising. In total, 17 practitioners received 96 hours of face-to-face training to date (ongoing).
- Strand 6: One-off arts events including a workshop by circus dance company for 26 children in Year 3 most affected by school closures, a Street Parade, and light installations to celebrate Diwali (ongoing).

Strands 2, 3, and 4 generated quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation data analysed in this report.

West Sussex, Creative and Wellbeing Schools programme

- School-based projects. Following consultation about transition, heightened anxiety and mental health difficulties, bespoke arts projects ran in 8 schools to respond to needs prioritised within each school and co-created with students (e.g., physical theatre, film-making, mask-making, puppetry, storytelling, music-making, inclusive dance, digital innovation etc.) with artists and practitioners and teachers with a specific focus (e.g., Shakespeare, Nature) or theme (e.g., friendship). Weekly sessions across two terms were held, either in small groups (as few as 7) or in whole year groups (up to 90), on a rotating schedule, including Arts Award. Approximately 100 sessions were conducted mostly with Year 5 or Year 9 (and a wider age range in special school and for family work), engaging up to 372 students.
- Training: CPD Masterclasses. A range of training was provided for teachers (e.g., two CPD sessions per school), along with a digital toolkit for promoting wellbeing and creativity, with a specific focus (Shakespeare through the lens), theme (inclusive practice) or outcome (An Introduction to Artsmark). CPD Arts Award training was provided for teachers in eight schools, and online training for Arts Awards was offered to 11 schools.

Both the school-based projects and training activities generated quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation data analysed in this report.

3. Evaluation approach: Conceptual framework

Evaluating the impact of the MHP was challenging because there was a very wide range of project activities designed to address many different issues in highly diverse populations of children and young people. In addition, the different projects, even within the same programme, were operating at very different delivery timescales due to challenges in commissioning and implementation.

Our focus was on fundamental principles regarding the mental health and wellbeing of CYP and their participation in creative arts, with the aim of providing flexibility within a common conceptual framework for the MHP partners to incorporate evaluations into their projects.

We utilised the underlying framework of mechanisms and outcomes developed through our most recent work on marginalised young people’s engagement with music (Levstek & Banerjee, 2021, see below¹). The model focuses on self-development and social acknowledgement as the key mechanisms driving improvements in emotional competence, confidence, and social competence, which together constitute a more agentic, active, and empowered profile – with greater wellbeing at its core.

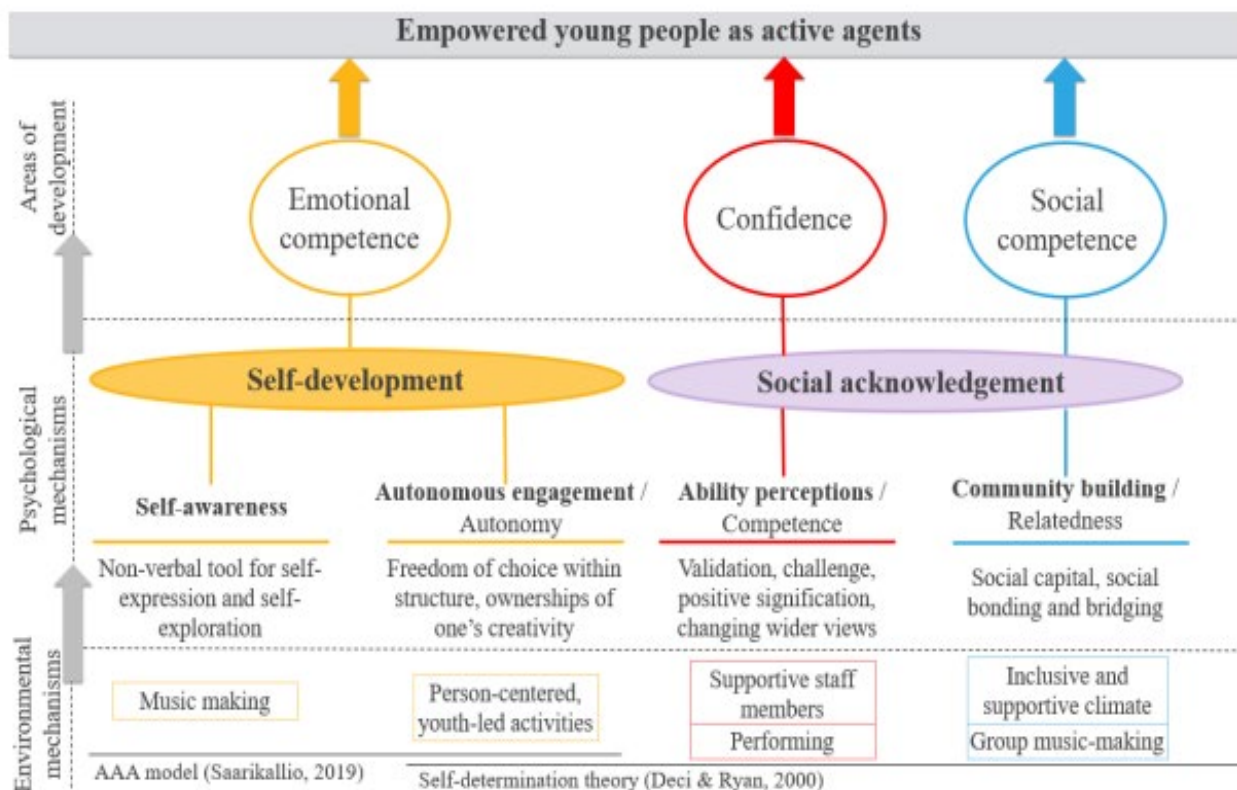


Figure 1. Conceptual chart showing psychological mechanisms and outcomes of young people’s engagement with the creative arts (from Levstek & Banerjee, 2021).

¹ Levstek, M., & Banerjee, R. (2021). A model of psychological mechanisms of inclusive music-making: empowerment of marginalized young people. *Music & Science*, 4, 20592043211059752.

According to the model, the effects of creative arts participation on marginalised young people's psychological wellbeing and mental health would be dependent on the extent to which the environment for the arts activities meets the basic human needs as expressed in self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2001): autonomy, competence, and relatedness.²

In addition, in line with Saarikallio's (2019) 'access-awareness-agency' model of music-based social-emotional competence,³ it is proposed that creative arts environments have the potential to provide access to self-expression, increase young people's self-reflective awareness of themselves and their experiences, and provide a sense of ownership and control over their own behaviours and their lives more generally.

Similar patterns have been observed in previous work with multiple art forms and creative genres, such as drama. For example, Hanrahan & Banerjee (2017) described the socio-motivational impact of drama and theatre processes on marginalised young people.⁴ A social context of nurture and support was linked to a sense of self-expression and self-exploration through the arts, which in turn enabled young people to develop a sense of agency and hope in crafting a new narrative about their future life.

These kinds of processes were expected to influence young people's personal sense of self-development alongside a feeling of being socially acknowledged, with these psychological mechanisms giving rise to improvements in perceived competence, confidence, and social skills, which in turn would foster greater mental health and wellbeing through empowering young people as active agents who have a sense of control in their own lives. This fits with the evidence and conclusions from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing in 2017.⁵

The current evaluation programme was informed by this framework, as described in the methodological approach below. However, both the quantitative and qualitative methods used included numerous avenues for new insights to emerge regarding the psychological mechanisms and moderators of change over time. Note also that the evaluation team conducting this research had no prior involvement with any of the arts projects in the Artswork Mental Health Partnership.

² Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

³ Saarikallio, S. (2019). Access-awareness-agency (AAA) model of music-based social-emotional competence (MuSEC). *Music & Science*, 2, 2059204318815421.

⁴ Hanrahan, F., & Banerjee, R. (2017). 'It makes me feel alive': the socio-motivational impact of drama and theatre on marginalised young people. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 22(1), 35-49.

⁵ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (2017). *Creative health: The arts for health and wellbeing* (2nd ed.). https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

4. Evaluation approach: Methodological framework

In line with previous research, we used a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative data relating to the issues presented in our conceptual framework. In line with the approach presented by Levstek and Banerjee (2021), we used a combination of session reports, practitioners' and young people's ratings of distance travelled, and in-depth focus groups and interviews with young people, creative practitioners, project leads, and school staff. The data analysis was based on work undertaken during the project period throughout 2022 and early 2023.

First, we used real-time measures of experiences *during* the project activities, thereby sampling experiences on repeated occasions over the course of the project. This took the form of **session reports** completed by practitioners for each session delivered. This included quantitative ratings of basic personal development and social orientation characteristics of the young people in each session, as well as open space to record notable events and developments.

Second, we supported project staff to complete **prospective or retrospective ratings of wellbeing, confidence, and related constructs** (comparing experiences at the start of the project and at the end, in some cases with interim time points). This was done at the level of individual young people where possible, but in the case of some projects was completed for groups of participants. Analysis of the ratings enabled a quantification of the level of impact observed in relation to key aspects of personal and social wellbeing.

Finally, we conducted in-depth **qualitative analysis of the key impacts and psychological change mechanisms** involved in the creative arts projects, expressed through the voices of the children and young people, practitioners, project leads, and school staff. Interviews and focus groups were transcribed and a thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify key themes and subthemes.

Each of these is described in more detail in the following parts of this report, with the key items/questions used in each method. At the outset, a number of key challenges should be noted:

- Extreme heterogeneity of projects in terms of: scope; creative focus; mobility of participants; cognitive, emotional, and motivational readiness of both children and young people and practitioners to engage with data collection (particularly where these involve questionnaires);
- Significant delays in commissioning projects and delivery of project activities;
- Difficulties in communicating with all the stakeholders to plan, design, receive feedback on, and revise evaluation; and
- Conflation of individual project evaluation with the overall MHP evaluation – it is important to clarify that the focus throughout was on the MHP as a whole, rather than on appraising the effects of each individual project, although factors that may be responsible for differences in young people's progress was certainly a focus.

It should be noted that we initially aimed to provide a larger number of self-report measures of mental health and wellbeing and underlying psychological mechanisms (e.g., self-worth, life satisfaction, perceived basic need satisfaction, motivation etc.) for every young person involved in every project. Using these at pre-intervention and post-intervention time points would provide fine-grained measures of self-reported psychological change at the individual level. However, it soon became

clear that most projects' delivery models and participant groups were not ready for systematic administration of multiple self-report measures at multiple time points.

Despite these challenges, the evaluation research drew in quantitative data and qualitative data relating to a large number of young people. Session reports provided group-level data on 375 young people, practitioner ratings were made for 50 young people at an individual level, and young people's self-ratings were obtained for 782 young people (with 418 made at an individual level, and 364 only available at aggregated group level).⁶ In addition, in-depth qualitative data was obtained from focus groups with 48 young people, focus groups with 21 creative practitioners, and interviews with 10 practitioners, teachers, or project leads.

We received ethics approval for our secondary analysis of quantitative data collected by the arts project teams, as well for the primary data collection we conducted to gather qualitative data from project interviews and focus groups. This approval was provided by the University of Sussex Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (ER/LMR24/13 and ER/LMR24/14).

⁶ Numbers of young people relate to participants at the first recorded time point of data collection.

5. Session reports: Insights into the experience of arts activities

Method

This dataset is based on session reports completed by practitioners from four different projects in Area I, two of which included two groups, and one of which included three groups. Over 50 session reports were completed, with an average of 6.17 sessions rated (range 4 to 19), with 2.85 creative practitioners present (range 1 to 5) and 7.89 young people present (range 4 to 15). It should be noted that even though young people and creative practitioners attended multiple sessions, group compositions changed from session to session.

For every session, practitioners rated four social orientation characteristics and four personal development characteristics of the group during the sessions on a scale from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive).

Social orientation outcomes:

- Young people's attitude towards each other
- Young people's attitude towards practitioners and other adults
- Young people's communication with each other
- Young people's sense of connectedness with each other

Personal development outcomes:

- Young people's display of general wellbeing, as a result of engagement with session
- Young people's display of self-efficacy and self-esteem, as a result of engagement with session
- Young people's display of aspiration and motivation in relation to future tasks and situations, as a result of engagement with session

For each young person, mean scores were calculated for social and personal outcomes. The internal consistency of the two scales was excellent (Cronbach's alpha = .81 for social, and .86 for personal).

Figure 2 shows the trend of how sessions were experienced, in real time, in terms of young people's social and personal profiles as perceived by practitioners. Each coloured line represents a different project group. These show distinctive patterns of changing profiles from one session to the next, sometimes rising and sometimes falling, at different times for different projects.

Findings

Results were analysed using linear mixed-effects models in the statistical package, R, considering the effects of sessions over time. Interestingly, the overall trend across all projects was for no statistically significant change in social outcome scores ($b = -.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .095$), and for a slight but statistically significant *decrease* in personal outcome scores ($b = -.05$, $SE = .02$, $p = .008$). However, these results were heavily influenced by the pattern of declining social and personal experiences on one project, shown by the green line in the graphs, relating to very specific issues that had arisen with the group involving a significant breakdown in young people's relationships and complications arising from external incidents. When this group was removed from the analysis, the results showed that

overall, there was a statistically significant *increase* in social outcome scores over time ($b = .08$, $SE = .03$, $p = .030$), whereas the personal outcome scores did not change overall ($b = .06$, $SE = .04$, $p = .118$).

Overall, these results, together with the graphs in Figure 2, show that while there was sometimes evidence of improvement in social and personal outcomes across the sessions, this was not a consistent pattern. Especially given that the group composition was not entirely stable across sessions, with both creative practitioners and young people moving in and out, and with many different life circumstances influencing young people’s behaviour and attitudes on a given day, it is perhaps not surprising that there are both rises and falls over time in young people’s experience of arts activities.

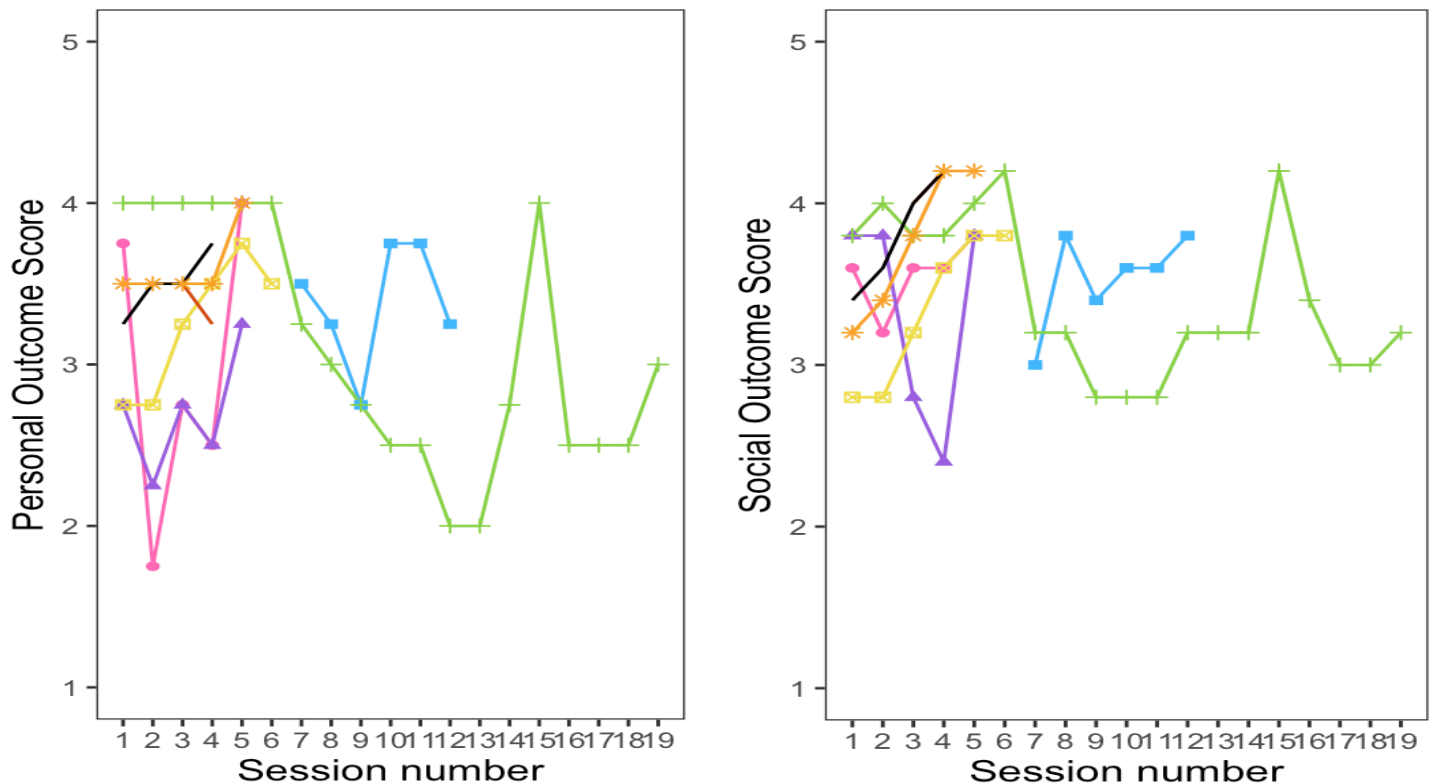


Figure 2. Session report ratings for personal development outcomes and social orientation outcomes across sessions.

Area IV provided four session reports using the same seven items as above, two from one project (for sessions 3 and 6 in a series of 20, with 3-4 young people included each time), and two from another project (for sessions 9 and 15 in a series of 30, with 7-8 young people included each time). There was a small positive shift in both cases, with average social scores increasing from 3.50 to 4.00 in the first project and from 2.25 to 3.50 in the second project, and with average personal outcome scores improving from 3.67 to 4.00 in the first project and from 2.33 to 3.67 in the second project.

Area V took a slightly different approach to session reports of their school group activities, with practitioners providing session report ratings at the last session and retrospectively rating the first

session in order to demonstrate distance travelled. This involved ratings of 8 groups (from 7 schools) involving a total of 331 young people in years 5-9 (an average of 41.38 young people being rated at a time, range 15 to 90), with an average of 11.25 sessions in each group series (range 3 to 21). The same seven items were used, but two other items were included, relating to young people's expression of feelings through the creative activity and their confidence in the creative activities. Comparing the 8 group ratings at the last session with the retrospective ratings of the same groups at their first session, we found that there was a statistically significant increase in scores from 2.70 (SD = .76) to 4.00 (SD = 0.31), $b = 1.20$, $t(7) = 6.42$, $p < .001$.

Additional qualitative data from session reports

The session reports included space for practitioners to record notable events, changes, or features of the social and personal profiles of the young people in each session. These provide a rich record of the complexity of psychological experiences in the creative arts sessions, and how they change over time. They also illustrate the often very challenging circumstances within which creative practitioners are working.

Some illustrative extracts of practitioners' experience – reflecting both challenges and successes – are shown below:

- *All of the students arrived late for this session which cost us 30-35 minutes of time resulting in the session starting late. The teacher in charge of collecting the students and escorting them to the session wasn't in school which resulted in the students assuming the session wasn't going ahead. After setting up I had to look for students and ask the receptionist to assist. Luckily, I found 4 students who were in one of the performance arts rooms. Shortly after lunch ended, 3 more came in later as the session progressed. To prevent this happening again, I told students to always go to the studio as I will be there every Thursday ready to start.*
- *XX arrived late. Was very loud and struggled to engage. They responded better with a lot of support from both staff members. XX was detrimental and made negative comments about their work. They did not distract as many other members of the group as before, however did distract YY. ZZ was very positive this week. Engaged very well with the group and was pleased with the [creative arts activity]. They seemed more positive today than they have shown in previous sessions.*
- *XX and YY did very well to engage in the poetry. The poetry gave them a vehicle to communicate ideas in their own words without having to speak out loud. This brought up some interesting themes around sports making them feel proud and good about themselves and other ideas around listening to people, being non-judgemental and supporting one another. The lino printing had a big impact on ZZ who was really engaged in doing the printing. She did a second print which she was really pleased with and you could see a visible change in how*

she felt about herself. She was smiling more and commenting that she thought it was really good.

- *People were sharing more. Two members expressed they find it hard to be verbal in the afternoon session. Both are neurodiverse. We created a chill out space which one of them used at the beginning of the session. XX expressed they were afraid of speaking in front of the group at the start but by the end were able to share sense of their words after the one to one. This was a big step for them.*
- *There still seems to be a divide between boys and girls in the room. The boys can be quite verbally disrespectful towards the girls.*
- *It transpired that XX had been involved in an incident and was currently being investigated.*
- *Overall today's session went really well. It was great to see the boys encouraging the girls and cheering them on as they performed to the camera. And it was great to see the girls come out their shell and take the lead on this.*
- *The group was quite dysregulated when they arrived because there had been a few weeks' break over Christmas and because there had been an incident in the classroom just before the session. The children weren't very confident at communicating with each other but could speak with the adults in the room about what they wanted e.g., some time in a quiet space, some water.*
- *The children's attitude toward each other has improved a lot over the weeks and they can feel very connected to each other on a good day. They enjoy the drama provision and get on better with the drama practitioners than schoolteachers. Two of the children in particular love acting and are really thriving in the group. In their other classes the group are more willing to talk openly. For example, one child used to have a stutter but because of being given time and space to talk in the drama group the other children now give him more time to speak in other classes and his stuttering is reduced.*

6. Practitioner ratings: Evidence of distance travelled

Method

Individual ratings of young people's creative, personal, and social characteristics were completed by creative practitioners working with five groups, three from Area I, and two from Area II. A total of 50 practitioner ratings were completed in relation to first session, with 40 followed-up with ratings at the final session. There were 26 cases with one interim report, and 12 of those had an additional interim report. The average number of sessions experienced by the young people was 11.14 (range 5 to 19). The young people being rated were in years 8 to 11, with 22 identifying as male, 24 as female, 1 as non-binary, and 3 preferring not to indicate gender.

Ratings were made on 10 items at each time point, divided into creative, social, and personal outcomes, with scores ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (completely true).

Creative outcome scores:

- YP is interested in creative arts activity]
- YP is good at [creative arts activity]
- YP have good knowledge of creative arts activity]

Social outcome scores:

- YP works well with other young people
- YP listens to others
- YP gets on well with adults here

Personal outcome scores:

- Creative arts activity] helps YP express their feelings
- YP makes a positive contribution to the session
- YP is confident
- YP is motivated to do things

For each young person, mean scores were calculated for creative, social, and personal outcomes. The internal consistency of the three scales was excellent (Cronbach's alpha = .89 for creative, .92 for social, and .90 for personal).

Findings

Figure 3 shows the scores for the five projects at all time points. Note that there was a mix of prospective and retrospective reports, with Project 1 involving a retrospective report of the first time point and Project 2 including retrospective reports of the first and the third time point (at the start of two terms). The project numbers are arbitrary and do not match those in other parts of the report.

Overall, the pattern showed a general tendency for scores to improve over time, but there were also some patterns of decline. In one case, work took place over two terms, and practitioners felt that similar improvements had been made by young people from the beginning to the end of each term.

The results were analysed overall using linear mixed-effects models in the statistical package, R, considering the effects of sessions over time, after controlling for age, gender, EAL status, and SEND status. Results show a significant improvement from the first to the last time point for creative scores ($b = 1.17$, $SE = .29$, $p < .001$), for social scores ($b = .84$, $SE = .20$, $p < .001$), and for personal scores ($b = .93$, $SE = .24$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, the number of sessions experienced did not appear to moderate the level of change in scores.

It is important to stress that these results are based on relatively small sizes (given that ratings concerned 40 young people across five projects), but the effect sizes were generally large. Across the projects, the overall weighted effect size for changes in outcomes for projects was 1.81 (range -.19 to 4.77), and this is far above the usual threshold of 0.8 used to indicate a 'large' effect size.⁷

This indicates that practitioners perceived a substantial change in the creative, personal, and social profiles of the young people over the course of the project.

⁷ Effect sizes were only computed for projects where more than 5 participants had ratings for the first and last sessions.

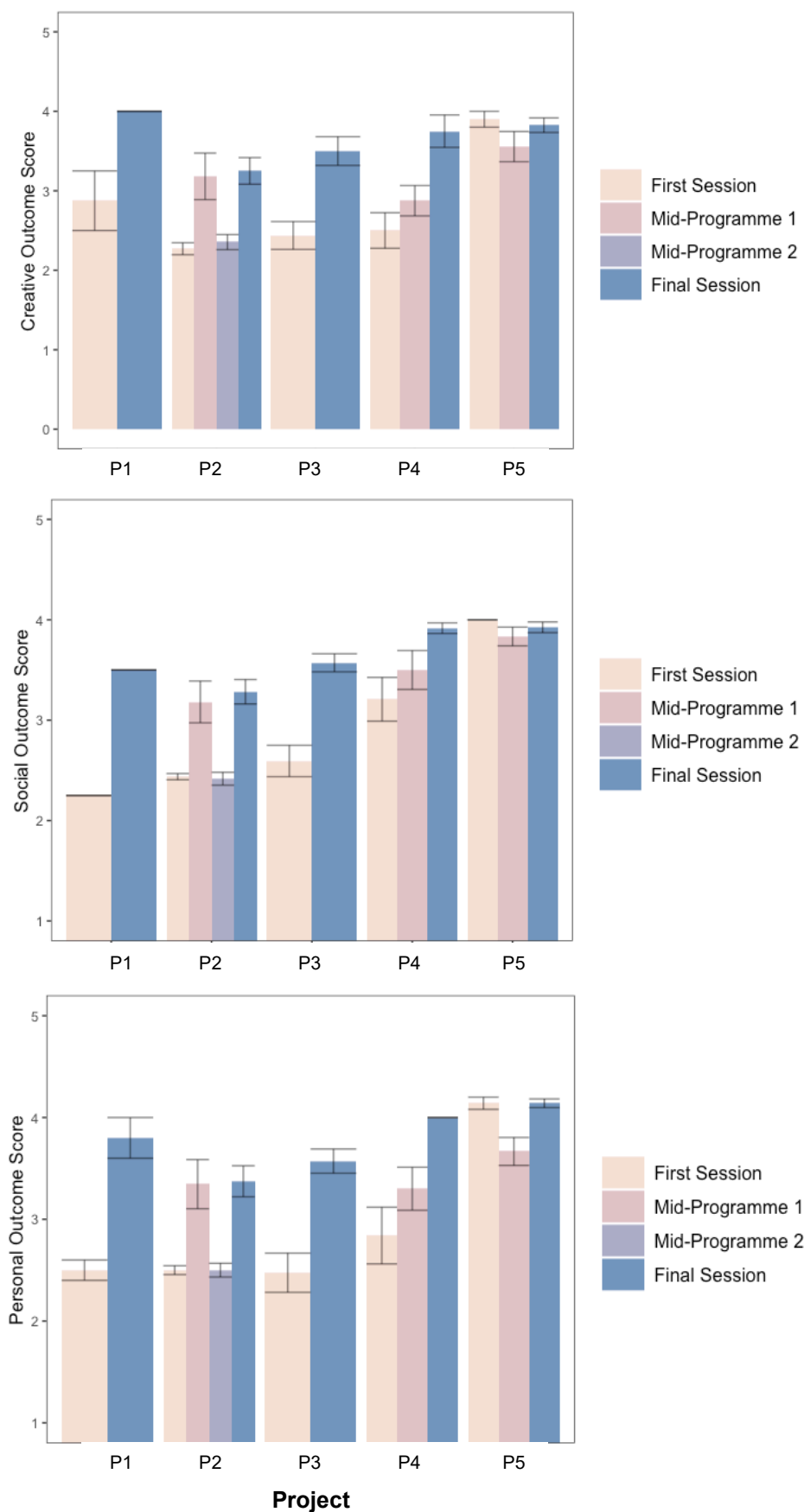


Figure 3. Practitioner ratings of creative, social, and personal outcome scores by time point.

Note. P1 First Session, P2 First Session and Mid-Programme 2 were retrospective reports completed at the subsequent timepoint.

7. Young people's self-ratings: Evidence of distance travelled

We received some quantitative data from all five areas relating to young people's self-rated socio-emotional wellbeing, personal development, and creative skills.

Preliminary analysis of Area III results from interim report

At the time of our interim report, we had received and analysed quantitative self-rating data from just one geographical area, Area III.

First, a total of 260 responses were received from young people involved in six one-off creative arts sessions (n ranged from 22 to 80 across the six sessions), and these represented answers to a question about whether they felt the creative session had made them feel better or worse (or no change). The scores were rescaled so that no change = 0, feeling better = 1, and feeling worse = -1, and the results are shown in Figure 4 below. The data supplied to us had already been aggregated as each group's average scores for their one-off creative session as a whole, so we did not have an estimate of individual variations in the level of perceived emotional changes. However, a one-sample t-test showed that the overall mean of the six group scores ($M = 0.73$, $SD = 0.15$) was significantly different from 0. This test was highly significant, $t(5) = 11.93$, $p < .001$. Thus, overall, the one-off creative sessions were perceived as having a significant effect on young people's emotional states.

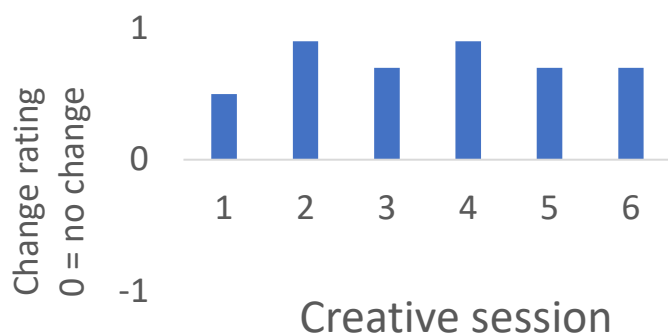


Figure 4. Young people's ratings of feeling better or worse following one-off sessions.

Area III also provided self-ratings of wellbeing at first session and follow-up from 104 young people who had taken part in creative arts sessions that took place in two schools and four other arts projects. These projects had used the UCL Wellbeing Umbrella, involving ratings from 1-5 for feeling 'friendly', 'interested', 'talkative', 'lively', 'motivated', and 'positive', generating a score that could range from 6 to 30. Again, only the group average scores were recorded at the first and final sessions, so unfortunately individual variations and effect sizes for differences over time could not be analysed.

However, Figure 5 shows that average wellbeing scores tended to be higher at the final session than at the first session, and the results showed a statistically significant overall improvement in wellbeing scores from the first session to the final session, $t(5) = 2.59$, $p < .05$. The average score across the six groups rose from 24.20 ($SD = 1.39$) at the first session to 25.97 ($SD = 1.15$) at the final session.

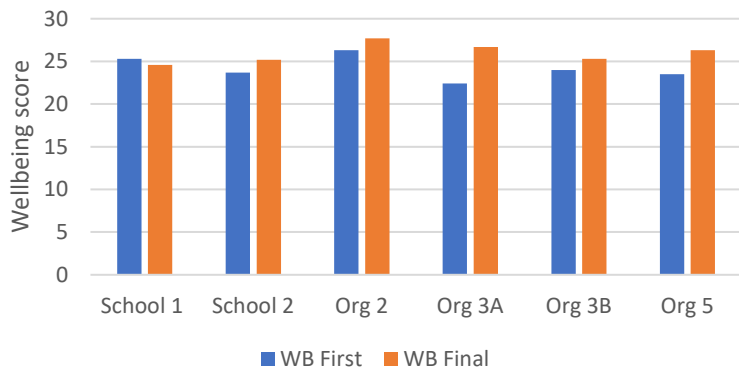


Figure 5. Young people’s self-rating of wellbeing at first and final session of creative arts projects.

Method

Following on from our interim report and additional encouragement to collect individual data matched across time points, Areas I, II, and IV provided self-ratings on the same ten items described above for the practitioner ratings. As before, ratings were divided into creative, social, and personal outcome, with scores ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (completely true).

Creative outcome scores:

- I am interested in creative arts activity]
- I am good at [creative arts activity]
- I have good knowledge of creative arts activity]

Social outcome scores:

- I work well with other young people
- I listen to others
- I get on well with adults here

Personal outcome scores:

- Creative arts activity] helps me express my feelings
- I make a positive contribution to the session
- I am confident
- I am motivated to do things

The internal consistency of these subscales was a little lower than for practitioner ratings but was still good (.77 for creative, .71 for social, and .70 for personal).

A total of 194 pupils (150 identifying as male, 39 as female, 2 as non-binary, and 3 preferring not to indicate) provided ratings at the first session. The majority were aged 13 to 19, although a small number of younger participants (aged 8 to 12) were included in the dataset. Matched comparisons could be made for 168 young people who provided data at the final time point, with 14 of those young people also providing data at an interim time point. The participants had experienced an average of 4.78 sessions (range 3 to 19).

Findings

As with the practitioner ratings, the results were analysed overall using linear mixed-effects models in the statistical package, R, considering the effects of sessions over time. There was a clear pattern of statistically significant improvement overall in creative outcome scores ($b = .67$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$), social outcomes scores ($b = .56$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$), and personal outcome scores ($b = 1.12$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). Figure 6 shows the comparisons across time broken down across 7 projects. Three of the projects included retrospective reports whereby young people rated themselves at the end of the project and also looked back to how they remember being at the first session. The other projects followed a prospective design with self-ratings made at the different times. Note that the project numbers are arbitrary and do not match those in other parts of the report.

The graphs show variation across projects depending on outcome types. However, the overall weighted effect size for changes in outcomes for projects was 1.71 (range .50 to 3.17), and again this is far above the usual threshold of 0.8 used to indicate a 'large' effect size.⁸ Thus, like the practitioners, the young people reported substantial changes in their creative, personal, and social profiles over the course of the project.

⁸ Effect sizes were only computed for projects where more than 5 participants had ratings for the first and last sessions.

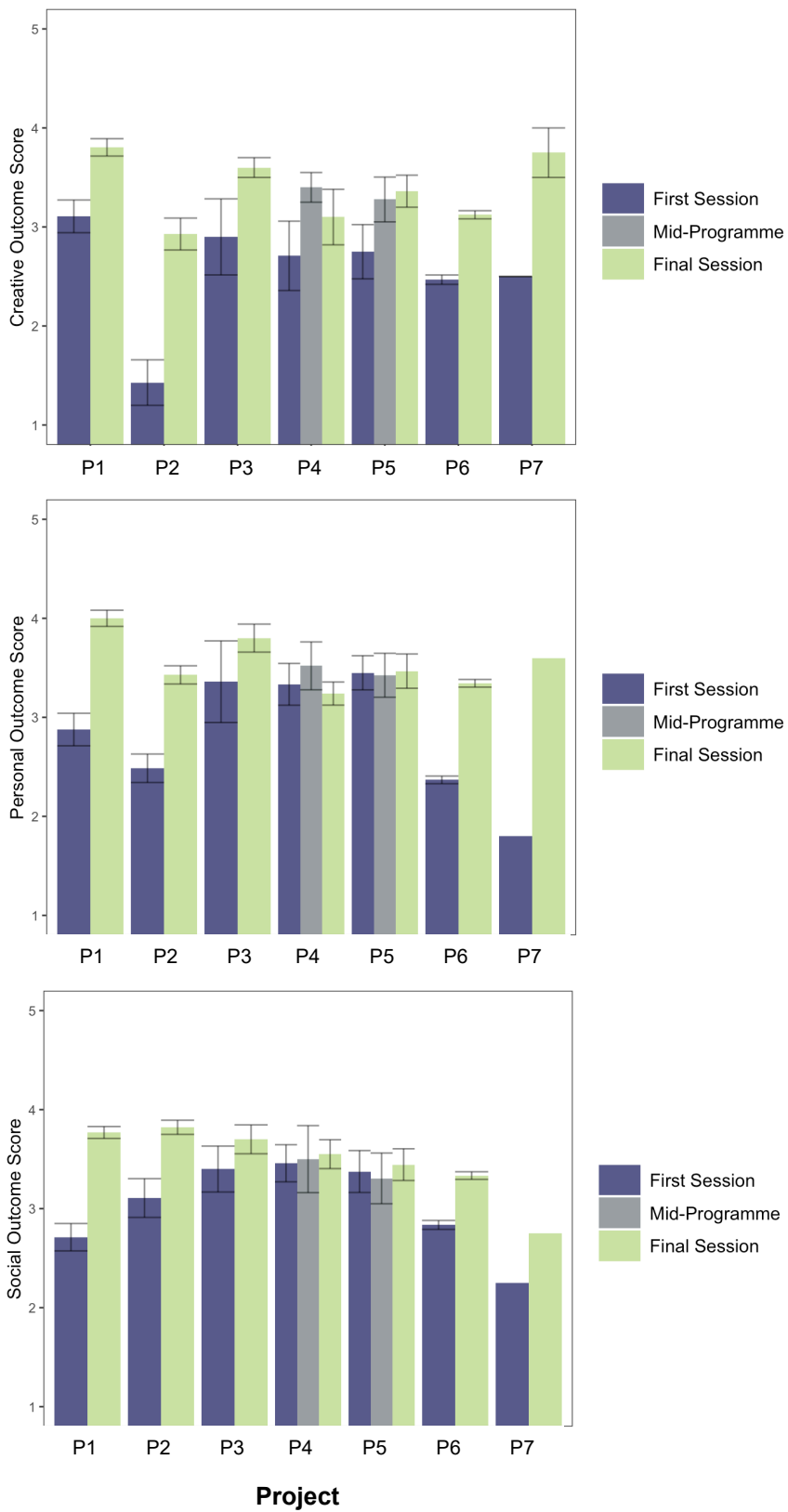


Figure 6. Young person self-ratings of creative, social, and personal outcome scores by time point.

Note. P1 First Session, P6 First Session, and P7 First Session were retrospective reports completed at the subsequent timepoint.

Additional data

Area V also provided a set of self-ratings by young people in years 5 to 8 at their final session, with retrospective reports on their first session. These included a larger set of 16 items⁹, but these only included two of the items used in the self-ratings by other projects, hence this dataset was analysed separately. The items were rated on a scale from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time).

A total score was computed across all 16 positively-worded items, as internal consistency of responding across those items was excellent (Cronbach's alpha = .92). We analysed the overall pattern of change for 162 participants from six creative arts groups and found a statistically significant increase in scores over time ($b = 0.03$, $SE = .01$, $p = .010$). The weighted effect size across the six groups was 0.87 (range 0.53 to 1.33), again indicating a large perception of change over time.

It is interesting to note again that although the number of sessions for the groups ranged from 4 to 21, this did not significantly correlate with the level of change experienced.

Finally, Area IV also provided self-ratings at the final time point of an arts intervention, from 51 young people (37 boys and 14 girls aged 16 to 18 years). These included 16 bespoke items regarding positive experiences and changes over time, with items scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Seven items of the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale¹⁰ were also included, scored from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time).

We were not able to make any direct comparison of experiences at different time points. However, Table 1 shows the average score (with standard deviations) on every item, and these are all clearly above the mid-point of the response scale, indicating a generally positive experience and perceptions of positive change.

⁹ I feel positive, I like trying new things, I have a good relationship with my friends, I feel confident, I feel calm, I am proud of my achievements, I am good at dealing with problems, I can talk about my feelings, I can share my ideas with the group, I can concentrate in lessons, I know how I can improve my mood, Creative activities make me happy, I am valued by the people around me, I feel comfortable being myself, I feel safe in this space, I am motivated to do things

¹⁰ Tennant, R., Hiller, L., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., Weich, S., Parkinson, J., Secker, J & Stewart-Brown, S. (2007). The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): development and validation. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 5: 63.

Table 1

Mean scores (with standard deviations) for each item in the Area IV self-ratings

Item	Mean Score	SD
I enjoy coming to the Arts Award sessions	4.04	0.28
I like the staff that work at Arts Award sessions	4.51	0.58
I feel welcome here	4.00	0.45
I can be myself here	4.10	0.41
People listen to me when I speak here	4.08	0.52
I feel more comfortable speaking in front of a group	4.10	0.30
I feel more confident working in a team	4.31	0.73
I am better at solving problems	4.06	0.47
I am better at making decisions	4.16	0.54
I am better at dealing with stressful situations	4.04	0.53
I get along better with adults	4.04	0.56
I get along better with people from different backgrounds	4.27	0.49
I am more willing to try new things	4.16	0.46
I feel more confident about myself	4.04	0.53
I am more positive about my future	4.14	0.40
I am more active or enjoy playing sports more	4.33	0.59
I've been feeling optimistic (positive, good) about the future*	4.06	0.24
I've been feeling useful*	3.71	0.46
I've been feeling relaxed*	3.76	0.51
I've been dealing with problems well*	3.88	0.52
I've been thinking clearly*	3.88	0.43
I've been feeling close to other people*	3.78	0.46
I've been able to make up my own mind about things*	3.86	0.45

*Items from the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

8. Qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with project leads, creative practitioners, school staff, and young people themselves. The principal aim was to understand the key areas of impact and the main facilitators that are making a difference for young people's mental health and wellbeing through involvement in creative arts.

Participants and context

Following on from our interim report, where interviews were carried out with six practitioners and project leads, we carried out additional site visits to selected project locations in Areas I, II, IV, and V. These enabled us to carry out seven focus groups with young people aged 8 to 17 years (48 in total), six focus groups with practitioners (21 in total), and ten individual interviews with practitioners, teachers, or project leads.

With regard to children and young people, participants in the school-based projects were in same-age focus groups and participants in youth group-based projects were in mixed-age focus groups. The smallest group size was 5 and the largest group size was 12. All focus groups took place during one of the classes/sessions dedicated to the Artwork funded project and a chaperone was present. Focus groups were conducted in person, except for one on Microsoft Teams, and took place in the usual school/youth club location towards the end of each project. The researcher audio-recorded the participants' responses and later transcribed these. The headteacher or project lead gave consent for the research to take place, and parents/carers and young people aged 16+ years received an information sheet and provided consent. Young people aged 15 years or younger also received age-appropriate information sheets about the study.

With regard to the practitioners and school staff, focus groups were conducted in person or online with adults involved in the programme of work. The smallest group size was 2 and the largest group size was 6. All focus groups were audio recorded. In-person focus groups happened at the school or youth group where the creative arts sessions usually happened, during the administrative time that had been set aside for the project. The online focus groups were scheduled in similar time slots but took place on Microsoft Teams. The participants were either practitioners/artists who ran the creative arts projects or affiliated teachers, some of whom facilitated projects in schools and some of whom had received a course of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training from artists in order to run creative activities more effectively. All those participating in interviews or focus groups received a project information sheet and provided consent.

Ten individual interviews were conducted with adults, where it was not possible to arrange a focus group (e.g., independent artists who had been commissioned for a project) or with anyone who was not able to attend the focus group on the day but who was happy to contribute to the research individually (e.g., teacher in school).

Focus group and interview approach

We adopted a semi-structured approach to all focus groups and interviews. Each focus group or interview began with a brief, age-appropriate reminder of what confidentiality, anonymity and withdrawal mean in the context of this research.

We then asked participants for background information to explain their involvement in the relevant creative arts project. We then worked through an exploration of the participants' experience of being involved in the project, with questions designed to tap into overall impressions of the work, emotional responses to the activities, facilitators and challenges encountered, and personal, social, and/or creative changes experienced. A number of questions specifically focused on the qualities of relationships with others involved in the project. Examples of key questions can be found in the Appendix.

Focus groups typically ran for between 30 and 60 minutes, and individual interviews typically ran for approximately 30 minutes.

Thematic analysis

We used a hybrid approach with deductive elements based on insights from other strands of work already undertaken (including interim findings, previous qualitative and quantitative analysis) and inductive elements based on new ideas emerging from the voices of young people and adults which had not been included at the interim stage. Key steps were in line with recommended practice, including:

- Familiarisation (e.g., listening to recordings and reading through all transcripts).
- Open coding (e.g., identifying initial codes from each recording)
- Reviewing initial codes in conjunction with insights from existing theory and knowledge from other strands of the project
- Collapsing across codes and/or separating into new themes and subthemes
- Reviewing analysis and defining themes and subthemes
- Finalising themes and subthemes

The next section provides an overview of the key themes and subthemes in relation to the original aims, with illustrative extracts from the transcripts. Note that this is not a comprehensive list of all themes and subthemes emerging from the focus groups and interviews.

Extracts are identified by the code number associated with the relevant participant: Creative Practitioner (CP) = creative practitioner or artist; Teacher (T) = teacher in school; Young Person (YP) = young person participating in the creative arts project; Project Lead (PL) = lead for a particular project but who was not themselves a practitioner delivering activities.

Themes and subthemes

Our analysis of qualitative data generated five themes, each with multiple subthemes, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes and subthemes from qualitative analysis of focus groups and interviews with young people, practitioners, and school staff

Nature of mental health impact	Key conditions for change	Mechanisms for driving change	Moderators of change	Facilitators and barriers for delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence • Empowerment and hope • Overall wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and space to talk • Open space for spontaneous sharing • Self-expression without fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity, autonomy, and responsibility • Being supported and seen differently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescale of project • Creative genres and art forms • Needs of young people • Variable response to formal qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link person in the setting • Flexibility to respond to unpredictability • Infrastructure for long-term support • Maintaining a focus on the art

Nature of mental health impact

Young people described an **overall improvement in self-confidence** as the most common change associated with participation in the Artswork activities. Their global sense of self-confidence was often described in terms of a comparison between a time 'before' and 'after' joining the project. This was often described in terms of improvements compared to how they used to be in another context (e.g., school lessons) or in particular types of situations (e.g., having to work with unfamiliar people).

For targeted groups, comments about feeling more confident tended to be about an aspect of themselves that may have been holding them back, such as language skills, not being very academically oriented, not being in mainstream education, or experiencing anxiety. The comments from young people suggested that the creative arts activities 'gave' them something different that helped them feel more confident in other areas of their lives.

I feel differently about my confidence because it's boosted now compared to how I was before doing the [creative arts] group. (YP)

These are people I would never have spoken to usually. We have this project we're all passionate about and it's like the golden thread that holds us together. I am more confident now I've been part of this. (YP)

I'm more confident now to be myself. (YP)

It's definitely better now. If I wasn't coming here, I'd stay at my house alone, well in my room, but having a reason to go out, it's a reason to be confident to get out of the house. (YP)

Both adults and young people ascribed the improvements to an overall sense of **empowerment and hope**, with a sense that the creative arts projects had offered a new forum for achievement and success.

I'm taking my GCSEs and I'm probably not going to pass because I'm so far behind, so just to know that I have this [creative arts activity] makes me so happy to have something to show for myself. (YP)

They're using what they did on this project as the provocation for their GCSE dance piece. (PL)

It's given them more of an idea of where they can go. It given them more of an idea of what can happen in life and what they can do to benefit you in the best way possible. (PL)

[Practitioner] can show you anything you want to learn. Their words are important because they've been in the career. It's more inspiring. (YP)

A major factor here appeared to be a sense of future possibilities that the young people had not considered as future options for themselves. Some young people envisaged a future self through the creative arts because they saw themselves pursuing it as a career and progressing with a particular art form, such as becoming a professional in that industry. Others commented on how the creative arts activities encouraged them more broadly to see multiple possible selves in the future.

It gave our young people an idea about a whole world out there. They showed incredible excitement, fascination even, for some of the things had never have entered their worlds before. (T)

They couldn't believe all the different jobs there are to do with the arts. There's that assumption out there that being an artist means you have to be 'good at art' and they're ruled out of this world on that basis. Some of them were really excited to learn you can be good in other ways like designing the space, building the sets, curating the show, writing the promotion blurb, and how important all of that is. (CP)

I've been really encouraged by how enthusiastic the [town] community is. The [local community] have been like, 'you're the future, so we'll help you with anything you need.' Because everyone here can feel that, we can do more with our future than maybe we thought of before. (YP)

[Practitioner] showed them a world they might not be very familiar with and now they have an idea they could be part of that. (T)

The third subtheme concerning the nature of impacts on mental health related to a **greater overall sense of wellbeing**. Young people talked frequently about feeling happier, and teachers often expanded on that and talked about wider impacts of improved wellbeing on attainment and attendance, particularly for young people whose attendance was quite poor.

I enjoyed [project] and it made me happy. I still feel happier at school than I did before. (YP)

I'm a much happier person. It kind of started with the days I'm here and then it spread across. (YP)

Actually it has had an impact on myself in my wellbeing. Doing this is something to look forward to every week. From my perspective, it's that positive effect right there. (YP)

Practitioners from community projects also talked about positive impacts in terms of improved wellbeing, as they had noticed a more optimistic outlook among the young people arising from a different sense of themselves and an ability to express themselves and be heard safely, mechanisms which are presented in more detail below.

Particularly those that academically sometimes struggle a little bit more, it kind of opened that barrier up a little bit for those children by allowing them to express themselves in a different way. That was good for their well-being in the sense that it allowed them to just be the same level as everybody else. (T)

Our young people were putting themselves in very vulnerable positions and some of the consequences of those things they were doing were impacting their mental health as well as putting them at risk of having a criminal conviction which sticks for life. They've said this [creative arts activity] is a way of being heard about what they need so they don't need to take those risks in the first place. (CP)

However, it is important to note that this sense of improvement was not always explicitly voiced by young people. As one practitioner explained: *"Once they're bought in, they love it. You can't ask them 'what are you getting from this?' because they'd never tell you but there's definitely wellbeing happening within this."*

Key conditions for change

The next theme relates to insights about the key conditions that seemed to facilitate positive change. The first subtheme was **having time and space to talk**. This related to how the creative arts activities provided young people with unique opportunities to talk about how they feel and what is important to them. Practitioners and project leads felt that these opened a space for young people to explore issues that they were facing and why they may not have been achieving their potential.

By the time you get to Year 9, you are supposed to be doing your homework and playfulness is a different concept. They'd say, 'But what are we supposed to do?' And it's like, 'Whatever you want to do'. They found that incredibly empowering... they all went off on their own creative paths and talked about things that mattered to them. (CP)

Sometimes when [participants experiencing mental health difficulties] meet in professional settings, the environment is off-putting... [In this project] their experience of being heard, being listened to in some way impacts how they see themselves. And then that changes how they are in the world. And then that's how change happens. (PL)

In performing the songs, they'd shown us how it is for them, what it's like to be confronted with these risks every day. This way, no one got into trouble. They could say how it really is because it came out through the performance. (CP)

Practitioners commented on the careful way in which the creative space is set up as an environment that validates the young people's lived experience by listening and making sure young people feel heard. Often, they were 'going up against' circumstances in which young people often perceive themselves to fail. This sense of failure could be related to adult responses regarding difficulties at school, but also arose from peer ridicule, which was something that some practitioners felt was perceived by young people as, 'Don't stick your neck out, don't say something weird because people will think you're weird'.

Most importantly, practitioners expressed a view that mental health and wellbeing were being improved partly as a result of having a 'youth-regulated space' where the young people themselves were the key agents. Examples were given where individuals had felt comfortable to say something important that was unique about themselves to each other or to a wider audience through their work. Some practitioners who had delivered a one-off event and returned to the school for further work with other year groups had learnt from teachers that these impacts had changed things for some young people in ways they did not think would have come about otherwise.

We work with a lot of young people who say they don't feel this agency in other parts of their life. They tell me they don't have any other space where they can be themselves. It makes me sad and angry that they feel they have to mask, they have to present a false self to stay below the radar, to fit that non-aspiration culture. (CP)

Here, the people that are running it, they let us talk and like spread our ideas. They just basically listen and usually other people don't. (YP)

In their lessons they have to concentrate on the learning and this project is different because it's more about listening to their ideas, so it feels very different. Taking their ideas and having everyone singing their words, that's something that will shine. (T)

They showed their film to the stakeholders and actually got concrete promises about what they will do to improve the situation for young people who are fearful in the places where they live. That was enormously validating to be heard. (PL)

We need both parts. We need the art, because that gives us something in common and we need the chat. We've definitely made the atmosphere of the sessions better since we started talking more and we're getting along more. (YP)

A closely related subtheme concerned the way in which the creative sessions had a primary focus on the creativity activity, **leaving an open space for spontaneous sharing of experiences.**

Somehow being in that group, doing that activity released some ability to speak about something that they had been keeping in. It created a safe space to calmly explain, to take ownership, to have the confidence to share their experience. (CP)

There's no other space for young people like the ones who we are working with to work all this stuff out... There was just this sort of reluctance to speak to anyone. Via the activities they're doing, they can engage with a challenging conversation and it doesn't feel confronting. They don't immediately want to turn away from it and run a mile because it's come up as part of what they're doing. (PL)

What we talk about is 'what's your week been like?' and then it branches out from there. It's interesting the directions the conversations go because you start with one topic and when you've got different people with different interests and different viewpoints and you get new perspectives. (YP)

This space for spontaneous sharing appeared to be linked with a sense of barriers being broken down, making new connections, and understanding different people's perspectives.

Doing the project has helped break down barriers. Me and these other people [in the group] had loads of drama but then we kind of, I don't know, we got more like in a big family. (YP)

At first we didn't talk much. We weren't wanting to get on with anyone else. Then we began getting involved with [creative activity] and we were all just talking about how we want to make this [creative art project] and we all just forgot about the friend-gang and just got together as one and went for it. (YP)

That's an important foundation we're offering: opportunities to see things from different perspectives. It's very different to knowledge transfer. It creates less tension for young people for whom the dominant perspective isn't their perspective and to have it validated is vital. (CP)

Here, you feel like your ideas are valuable to everyone, not just [Practitioner] but everyone. I feel like it's a place where everyone knows everyone else's strengths and weaknesses and everyone acknowledges that and plays to their persona. We all have to come together as one to make one good thing. And when we make a bad thing, it's all of us, not just one person. (YP)

At the same time, even with a great deal of spontaneous sharing, some participants emphasised the importance of having a space that was reliable and predictable.

Even though we all have fun in here, it's very calm and controlled and relaxed so you can be expressive. (YP)

A final subtheme in this section relates the way in which young people were able to **express themselves without fear** of getting things wrong or being seen negatively. They felt able to try out risky situations and talk about difficult experiences in safe spaces, and to make mistakes without negative judgements being made of them.

It's people not judging you that matters. That's why this space is different. (YP)

We created an environment where they felt they can achieve and I suppose we did that by going into it in a very kind of open way, that there's no incorrect answer. (CP)

Children are sort of grilled at school and expected to achieve certain things. There's such a heightened sense of success and failure. It can lead to people thinking creating something is a really big thing but actually you just do it stage by stage and then there's quite big surprise, 'I've done this' and that perhaps helps other things seem possible. (PL)

The young people always feed back, 'we love how you say there is no right or wrong'. (CP)

I think very often what we're giving is a safe and protected space for young people to take those risks. It's almost like letting them try it on for size through the creative process. (PL)

Mechanisms for driving change

The third theme emerging from the qualitative data relates to an area of insights concerning the psychological mechanisms that enabled the positive changes to take part. Interviews emphasised two major themes relating to this. The first was an inter-related set of key mechanisms of **authenticity, autonomy, and responsibility** that was thought to be driving the personal developments in the young people. This was clearly a deliberate goal of the arts-based projects.

This isn't culture with a capital C. Our resource is to engage with young people in things they are interested in and say okay and taking that seriously but supporting them through it. By working in their style of music we're not sanitising their reality. These issues do exist, they are very much a real part of their lives. (PL)

Creatively, we're getting young people into a place of thinking, 'What are the other choices I can make? Is that a choice I really want to make?' and boosting their confidence around being able to consider that in itself. (CP)

This art project's helping them occupy their own space and feel they can tackle things as they are rather than making people feel 'this is a box I've got to fit into'. (CP)

Following on from the earlier description of the creative arts spaces, young people clearly expressed a unique sense of 'feeling more themselves' in the context of the creative sessions, such that they could be authentic in their expressions. One almost paradoxical description of being more yourself when playing a character came up repeatedly from young people.

Even though it's a performance and you play a character, you can be more yourself in that character than you can be in normal life. (YP)

We don't have to be like ourselves when we're performing. We can be a character and then bring ourselves into that character. Because it's freer, you can bring yourself to it more and there's more of you there. (YP)

When we dance, the way you move your body is different to the way anyone else in the room moves their body. For the person watching, it's like reading a book so they can see exactly what you are, what you're feeling and thinking, through your dance. I'm saying things I wouldn't normally say when I dance. (YP)

Interestingly, the creative arts spaces often appeared to foster a sense of autonomy, which was combined with a feeling of responsibility.

Whereas some of them just thought they were just gonna say something silly just to make other people laugh, [Practitioner] didn't just laugh. He'd be like, 'Right. OK. That's what you're going with and I'm gonna run with it', kind of thing. It was taking value in everything that they did...I think he was trying to make them like take ownership. If you're going to suggest an idea like that, we're still gonna go through the process kind of thing. He wasn't being unkind at all. He was doing it in a really supportive way. But I think it sent the message that you don't get out of it by giving a 'wrong' answer. It made them take ownership and think about their choices. (T)

There are no obvious leaders, people muck in. We bring that out in our practice by accepting anything as having value. Whatever anyone says, you acknowledge and build, by saying, 'yes, and....' so that everyone's voice is heard and shown through the work. These principles can surprise them because they're not used to it. (CP)

The second major subtheme concerned the perception of a distinctive role of creative practitioners in enabling **young people to feel supported and seen differently**. Participants felt that young people's mental health was supported by feeling that practitioners were different from other adults in their lives, in particular being perceived as 'more on their side'.

I do think there is a value in arts practitioners going into school and being a new relationship for young people, a new face without all old the narratives, without that baggage that surrounds individuals. (CP)

Teaching and facilitating - they are different jobs. It's about an exchange and it's about drawing stuff out of young people and actually that takes time and it takes quiet moments and it takes group moments. We don't know what it's going to be because we're leaving that up to the young people. We have to persuade teachers to trust the process - trying to contextualize for a school that sometimes you have to give a young person a bit of power and a bit of agency in order for them to feel okay. (PL)

Practitioners coming into school hold a different space and perform a different role. (CP)

Young people appreciated the creative activities for the way that they provided opportunities to be listened to and heard. For young people, these spaces were mainly described as 'welcoming'. They talked a lot about how they felt listened to about their creative ideas.

Here, the people that are running it, they let us talk and like spread our ideas. They just basically listen and usually other people don't. (YP)

[Practitioner] always listens to you and he's mindful of what you want to say. He'll give us suggestions about what we can do to make ourselves heard. (YP)

One thing I've noticed is that as a practitioner, you only have to take the smallest amount of interest in what a young person is saying for their eyes to light up. It's a feeling I've had a lot recently, when I've met someone new and they say something and you ask a basic follow up question and they almost can't believe that you're interested. (CP)

The important thing is to allow the children to be in the position of being the experts, rather than being somebody who is dictated to, they get the power and the agency themselves. (CP)

This sense of being seen and heard differently came through strongly as a distinctive feature of engaging with the arts. Practitioners talked about how responding creatively can enable young people to say things that are meaningful to them (e.g., role play, playfulness, responding to a story), in a way that may not be possible in more 'direct' interventions.

If you go in to run 'a mental health workshop' or 'a workshop on county lines', they don't have a story to hang their thoughts and feelings onto. It can come across as patronising because you haven't explored the topic in a way that shows you are always interested in hearing what their thoughts and feelings are about a situation. In our [creative exercises], we're giving them opportunities to express those through creative activities which makes it a lot easier for people to speak and be heard. (CP)

I think of it like we're smuggling in the vegetables because we're doing the mental health work but we're not using the language that, for this stigmatised group, gets their backs up. (PL)

Through the arts stuff, I had a greater sense of empowerment for myself but at college I don't feel it at all. That's where the relationships come in. [Practitioner] can crack jokes and that makes him feel more friendly. It can be friend to friend. That's what it takes to actually be empowered. (YP)

[Practitioner] sees you differently. We've got all these statuses and then there's this new face and we get to know him and we have some fun with him and we get to feel calm with him and get to feel safe and we get to feel like nothing's wrong. (YP)

Moderators of change

The fourth theme related to a range of factors that moderated the level of change experienced by young people. One factor was the **timescale of the arts project**. Interestingly, short projects (half day/whole day) and longer projects (series of weeks or months) were not considered to be more or

less impactful for young people, but rather the impact was felt to be of a different kind. Practitioners reported that the former is about creating a lasting memory of an experience that can go on to inspire change, whereas the latter is about going on more of a journey together, which was considered to be ideal for youth-led projects where no one knew at the start what the end piece would look like.

There are great impacts you can have by spending one day, or even half a day in a school. It's vital those experiences are delivered to them in a way that is high quality to create memorable experiences. (CP)

Seeing a bad piece of theatre can turn you off for life. But there's nothing better than a great piece. It might be that at school is the only time they get to participate in anything that exciting. (CP)

The quality of the art, the quality of the interaction of the audience, it's got to be quality to capture their imagination, to be memorable. Hopefully the message will stay or spark. (CP)

There is a different quality of impact you can have when you spend a series of weeks or months or even years together with young people where they feel respected and heard in their creative development. (CP)

Long-term engagement allows gradual processes that can be life changing. (CP)

Participants also described how different approaches were needed with different **creative genres and art forms**, even though positive impacts could be commonly experienced regardless of the art form involved. In the visual arts, practitioners had found ways to show what great art does but did not themselves do any pieces because young people often held views about being 'good' or 'bad' at art that they were keen to overcome.

It was a winning formula, really. There's the first input which is [practitioner] doing all the looking at art and all the talking. Then there's me coming in after and doing the creative bit which is the doing... we encouraged them to work with anything and just make a start mark-making. (CP)

However, for performance arts, it was important for practitioners to show the potential of the art form up-front to engage young people with the subtler themes. Teachers also felt it was important too for young people to see a live performance.

If you can do a piece that is interactive and involves every single student in some way that they can be comfortable doing, you can explore those mental health and wellbeing issues creatively and probably more deeply. You've got an amazing jumping off point for any workshop if you've presented a shared experience that everyone engaged with. (CP)

It is a shame that nowadays the children don't get so much opportunity to go to shows because it can light them up. (T)

A third major moderator of change was the extremely high level of variability in the **needs of young people**. As shown in the list of programmes and projects at the start of this report, participants in the Artwork activities came from extremely diverse backgrounds, and this made a difference to what

could be achieved in any given creative arts project. Project leads, practitioners, and school staff needed to be extremely sensitive to this diversity and calibrate expectations for change accordingly. The key factor in addressing this was felt to be having responsive creative practitioners who could meet the young people just where they were, recognising their needs and providing appropriate support.

Inadvertently we've ended up working with young people who I feel are quite stigmatised, who themselves feel they are persecuted and discriminated against because of their community/ neighbourhood/ friends.... And so they acquire this label of being aggressive/ disruptive/ a problem rather than vulnerable. (PL)

There's a high level of neurodiversity in that group, which can sometimes be sort of laughed at by other people, but especially within sort of like a drama setting like this, they just totally go with it. So it was a wonderful group. (CP)

There is a group of young trans people who were neurodiverse and felt like the main event was a bit too much and they could take part in a workshop in a side room because it was so quiet and calm. (PL)

[Theatre practitioners] were very good at working with these children and they are all very capable of recognising what each child needs and drawing them back in. (T)

It should be noted that some young people were in very difficult circumstances and had very high levels of individual need relating to day-to-day events. The need for flexibility to respond to these unpredictable developments is discussed under the final theme below.

Finally, another subtheme concerned the **variable response to formal arts qualifications** among young people. The ArtsAward, for example, was a strong motivator for some young people, who saw it as a real chance to gain a qualification:

Getting a qualification out of it is very important to our young people. (PL)

Doing the ArtsAward was important to me because it was my own research that I submitted. I wanted to do that work and I did it all myself. That's quite different to school where I have to do something I'm told to do and I don't care about it. (YP)

I wouldn't normally want to write at all but [ArtsAward] makes sense to me and I see the purpose of it so I enjoy it. (YP)

But for others, practitioners felt it could be an additional pressure, if introduced too early in the process, and they took time to allow young people to feel confident about what they were doing before letting them know they were working towards a qualification

We're doing the ArtsAward but covertly at the moment because they don't have the confidence to think they can achieve yet. (CP)

Facilitators and barriers for project delivery

The final theme related to practical issues concerning project delivery, and many participants provided helpful feedback regarding factors that facilitated success and those that served as obstacles and hindered progress.

One key subtheme related to the importance of having a **key link person in the setting** for the project delivery (e.g., school, youth centre etc.) who was very familiar with the context and the young people and could facilitate delivery.

I was lucky to have a youth worker who they all knew and trusted. (CP)

The Youth Worker really helped establish the relationship at the beginning. The group wouldn't have accepted me. There were people who literally did not speak but she knew them and she knew that just being there was a big sign they were into it. For them, in particular, if she hadn't been there, they would never have kept coming. (CP)

I was the one who could run around the school to bring them to the session when they forgot. The practitioner would have just been in an empty room and not able to know where they were. (T)

Once our co-ordinator based in the school was back, things ran a lot smoother. (PL)

A second subtheme relates to the need for **flexibility in response to unpredictability**. As noted in the previous discussion of young people's needs, as well as the general diversity of the young people's backgrounds, there was often a great deal of volatility in the young people's lives, relating to complex and complicated circumstances that often changed at short notice. For many of the targeted projects, there were incidents taking place that made working with these young people particularly challenging. Several of the projects had a young person excluded while they were working with them, and other young people were under intense pressure for specific reasons to do with their life situation at that time (e.g., asylum status, investigated by the police).

Many participants highlighted the importance of an agile and adaptive response to changing circumstances. All staff involved clearly have to work hard to sustain project delivery regardless of incidents taking place. Examples included: finding a different venue out of school if it suited young people better; setting up a one to one opportunity for a young carer who could not meet at a regular time each week; supporting a young person to travel to the sessions; arranging blended delivery for young people unable to leave home that day; and calling young people who did not have internet access to do an online session while they were suspended/ temporarily excluded.

[The teacher] does have to work incredibly hard to get them to [the creative arts activity] and it's very dependent on the attitude the young people might have that day which shifts. There's a huge amount of complex mental health need as well. (CP)

Some days it all kicks off. They're upset, they're up on the roof, security are called to try and get them down. There's no way they'll settle after an incident like that. (T)

We had some real safeguarding concerns which we had to deal with. (PL)

To continue to deliver and be able to be responsive is actually huge for this project because it means things can carry on. When things happen, we just dust the activity so it can be done another way. That waste of money, that waste of our time and everyone's time, that's not happening. That's a real strength of the project from that side of things, but also from that well-being side of things for the young people. They know it's a constant. (CP)

This ability to respond rapidly and find a way to support the young people and keep the project going required a sensitivity to each young person in each particular context, and a recognition that different practices would be needed for different people in different places.

We were able to put something together so that these young people could be part of it, when they found they were unable to engage with some of the other activities which are youth led. (PL)

Each school is completely different from the next and you don't have long at all to get to know the setting you're working in. (CP)

It was interesting to note that some young people were felt to need more time to transition more gradually into the creative activities, whereas others needed to have a shorter and streamlined approach.

It's difficult to transfer from all these different subjects in the lessons to [creative arts session] because we have our schedules and stuff and sometimes I wish we'd have time to get relaxed, get ready to start. (YP)

We changed our delivery because they couldn't do such long session, so now we run two activities with half the group each and switch half-way through. It's working well. (CP)

The next subtheme relates to the **infrastructure for long-term support** that was felt to be needed in order to maintain successful project delivery and evaluate long-term impacts. This was felt to be challenging in the context of a perceived narrowing of the school curriculum and more limited availability of creative arts activities for young people. Some of our focus groups and interviews highlighted the role of creative practitioners in providing both direct opportunities for young people and support to school staff in the form of CPD, but there was an acknowledgement that both were necessary and required an investment of resources. A clear sense of 'buy-in' from school staff was also felt to be integral to the success of the work.

I see a leaning towards delivery through CPD and that's great but it shouldn't be a replacement for having a practitioner because young people see them differently. (PL)

Some teachers thought it was outrageous the children were 'going off to paint' and we got around that by getting the ones who did 'get it' to talk it up a bit. (CP)

Sometimes we were in a school and no one really knew why we were there. It's so important to have the buy-in higher up. (CP)

One of the reasons I was able to deliver this with so many young people involved is because our Headteacher makes the arts a priority. (T)

When this is in place, and the work of the creative arts projects is fully aligned with and supported by the school staff, practitioners expected amplified benefits for young people:

There's a lot that is really helpful and brilliant about projects like this. But I think the fact that [teacher], who will continue to be there as the one that's doing the face to face most of the time with the students, is the strength of the project that enables empowerment to begin to happen for young people. (CP)

However, many people in our interviews and focus groups highlighted the challenge in terms of investing resources in creative arts work, particularly over the long term, and this was also connected to a general sense of under-investment in the education system more broadly.

It's important to have the resource to engage the kind of young people we've been working with on their level and where they're at. (PL)

Just being here you can see how incredibly underfunded this school is. You can feel how 'on their knees' the staff are. They do a great job. They're supposed to stay for the session. It's unrealistic. They're needed elsewhere. Or maybe they just need a bit of time to themselves. I'm fine with that. I can see their reasons. (CP)

This need for a commitment to long-term engagement with the creative arts was also considered to be a factor in planning the evaluation work, where practitioners recognised that the full impact of engagement with the creative arts months or years later may not be known:

I think it is really hard to see impact when the time you're with them for isn't that long. But that is actually what I'm interested in. What does it look like in six months' time for this young person? (CP)

One final comment on practical delivery relates to the importance of **maintaining a focus on the art** produced by the young people. In the context of goals relating to mental health and wellbeing, people in focus groups and interviews reminded us of ensuring that the arts activities need to be actively celebrated, and in fact used in themselves as a framework for assessing positive impacts on wellbeing (in a way that may not be captured by standard evaluation methods such as questionnaires and interviews):

If you asked [the young people about changes], they probably wouldn't say a huge amount and if you ask me, I can't talk for them. But the work they're producing is beautiful and incredibly impressive. All of them have produced work that stands on its own artistic merit. The art that they've made shows me that they are engaged. It would take time for them to do that piece of work. It's creative. It's original. There's a freedom that comes with being able to be creative and original, so that tells me they feel safe. The time it takes to research tells me they're committed, the depth they've gone in to make some of the choices they've made, tells me that this is something they enjoy doing, and it's developing well-being. It's way, way, way more about the work. (CP)

The feel in the room [at the celebration event] was incredible. You know, we wanted it to feel luxurious, to feel a bit special. It was so well organised. We had a professional venue, a line-up of hosts, we provided 'things of value' for young people, 'things of quality' ... there was this growing realization which was just so lovely, of people, just really realizing it that it was all for them. (PL)

9. Summary and limitations

Overall, our data analyses provide triangulated evidence of perceived positive changes in young people's mental health and wellbeing – encompassing both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions – through engagement in creative sessions.

Key evidence in support of this conclusion can be found in both the quantitative data and the qualitative data, representing perspectives from multiple informants. The overall results from the practitioner ratings and young people's self-ratings show statistically significant improvements not only in relation to creative skills, but also in relation to personal development and social orientation, which are the crucial components of mental health and wellbeing: young people's relationships had improved, as had their self-expression, motivation, and confidence. The weighted effect sizes show that the level of change over time was well above the conventional statistical threshold for a 'large' effect, and this was true for both the practitioner ratings and the young people's self-ratings. Furthermore, although part of this may reflect the use of retrospective reports of profiles at the start of the projects, strong improvements were also observed in multiple groups that were using prospective reports.

The qualitative data backed this conclusion up by adding in-depth insights into the nature of the changes experienced by young people. Most striking was the way in which the focus groups with young people revealed changes in the key issues emphasised within conceptual and methodological frameworks of wellbeing: feeling optimistic, more connected with others, empowered, and effective. This was echoed by creative practitioners, project leads, and teachers, who shared numerous specific examples of progress being made by young people.

Our focus groups and interviews enabled us to understand the psychological mechanisms involved in these changes, and the key environmental conditions that needed to be in place in order for the changes to occur. The creative arts projects were seen as providing a unique space for young people to express themselves authentically and share their experiences, with the creative practitioners seen as having a very distinctive role in seeing, hearing, and advocating for them. This fits with the theoretical models and past evidence described earlier and adds new depth to our understanding, particularly in relation to the balancing of autonomy and confidence with personal responsibility as well as respect and care for others' perspectives.

Notwithstanding the overall pattern of improvement, it was clear that positive changes were not universal. The session reports used in some projects, which were collected in real-time, provide a rich insight into the regular challenges faced by creative practitioners as they seek to engage young people who may be regarded as 'hard to reach'. While the reports show an encouraging positive trend over time, especially in relation to young people's social orientation, it was clear that a combination of young people's needs and life circumstances could derail a project and lead to a very challenging situation. The practitioner ratings and young people's self-ratings also showed that patterns of change can vary from one project to another. These sometimes related to project-specific issues with the creative arts activities themselves, or in the way in which people engaged with the evaluation methods, but often related to unpredictable developments outside the arts projects.

In line with this, our qualitative analysis revealed a number of moderating factors and practical issues that influenced the success of the projects. Perhaps surprisingly, there was no clear evidence that

longer projects or more sessions were more successful in generating positive changes: amongst the projects, there was no clear consistent evidence that the number of sessions attended predicted the level of reported change. However, many felt that it is impossible to make strong comparisons because projects taking place over a shorter (even one-off) or longer timescale involved different kinds of impacts. Understanding these nuances is an important challenge for future evaluation research. Beyond timescale factors, our analysis highlighted the extent to which projects had a supportive infrastructure (particularly in relation to the settings being used, such as school staff buy-in, good link personnel to facilitate delivery, investment in resources etc.) and could be agile and flexible in responding to rapidly changing circumstances. These are key priorities for future arts programmes designed to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Limitations

It is important to recognise the limitations of the current evaluation research. As noted earlier, we had originally planned to use a much wider range of standardised questionnaires tapping into different components of mental health and wellbeing, but it had become quickly apparent that the project delivery mechanisms would not accommodate this, especially given the constraints on the time available for the creative activities, the willingness by young people to engage with multiple questionnaires, and the infrastructure for collection, storage, and recording of such data across an extremely diverse range of projects. This remains a critical challenge for future evaluation research in this space, as the more detailed quantitative data generated by all young people at multiple time points (in a prospective design) will be valuable for demonstrating psychological changes in a more precise way.

In addition, the opportunity to draw strong causal conclusions is limited given that none of the projects were in a position to use random allocation to the arts project vs. a comparison condition (not receiving the arts projects experience). Thus, while the positive changes observed in this report are encouraging, it is not possible at this point to definitively attribute the changes to specific aspects of the creative arts projects. This is a longstanding challenge in this area, as random allocation is often unfeasible in these contexts, where the arts participation is itself a major issue. Further research is needed in order to establish effective evaluation methodologies for the next stage in evaluating projects of this kind.

A further limitation concerns the scope and scale of each creative arts project. Although some projects reached large numbers of young people, many projects involved in-depth work with small numbers of individuals, often those with significant levels of needs and/or from highly mobile populations, making it difficult to draw generalisable conclusions about the effects of each individual project (hence the focus on the MHP as a whole for most of the analyses in the present report). This raises questions about the way in which best practice can be identified in order to inform the future development of each individual arts project.

10. Recommendations

Based on the results of the present evaluation work, the following recommendations are set out as directions for further work. They are divided according to key issues for consideration by commissioners, by those leading or practising projects in the arts, and by those working in relevant areas of children's services.

Commissioners

- Extend and further develop the systematic programme of investment in arts-based approaches designed to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensure that evaluation practices and capacities, including time and staff training, are built into the delivery model for all projects from the outset.
- Confirm that a clear supportive infrastructure has been established in all settings where project delivery will take place.
- Identify different categories of creative arts projects in order to streamline support for project delivery and evaluation activity, and to calibrate expectations for project teams.

Creative arts project leads and practitioners

- Identify in advance the supportive infrastructure that is needed in each setting for project delivery, including physical needs, a key link person to facilitate activities, reliable communication channels, effective transitions to and from other activities in the setting, and staff awareness.
- Develop a delivery approach that is resilient to changing individual needs and circumstances, while maintaining the key conditions for positive change identified in this research.
- Ensure that significant time and resource relating to prospective evaluation work, including commitments to staff training, have been built into the project delivery.
- Establish a strong framework for gathering, storing, managing, and (where appropriate) sharing data for evaluation purposes and for joint partnership working with other services.

Policy-makers and practitioners in education, mental health, and related children's services

- Work with commissioners to integrate arts-based projects into the provision offered within education, mental health, and related children's services.
- Ensure staff have a good understanding of the rationale, approach, and activities of arts-based projects taking place with the children and young people involved in their services, and can align this work with their own practices.

- Where staff are aware of arts-based projects being delivered within the context of their services, ensure that there is a supportive infrastructure in the relevant settings in order to maximise the positive impact of those projects.
- Provide guidance and training to staff to adapt the key conditions for positive change from arts-based projects into standard practice within their own services (e.g., pedagogical approaches in schools).

Appendix

Example questions from topic guide for focus groups with young people (adapted to be age-appropriate)

- What was it like for you to be part of [project]?
- What did you find most enjoyable?
- What things, if any, got in the way of something being enjoyable?
- What things, if any, really helped you to engage with the [creative arts activities]?
- What things, if any, really stand out to you from the experience of doing [project]?
- How has your outlook changed, if at all, towards doing [creative arts activity] since doing [project]?
- Were there any things that you wish had been done differently?
- What was it like working in a group to do [creative arts activity]?
- How did this [creative arts activity] develop your skills/ knowledge of [artistic area]?
- How did you find working with the [trained teachers/ skilled practitioners] at first/ as the project went on?
- How did you find working with other children and young people to [make music/ perform/ draw etc.] at first/ as the project went on?
- What was different for you, if anything, about this experience? How did it make you feel?
- What was different, if anything, about this time you spent here doing [project]?
- What difference, if any, did the [creative arts activity] make for you?
- What difference has it made, if any, since you've all spent time doing [creative arts activity]?
- What impact, if any, did being involved in [the project] have on your attitudes and beliefs about your creative skills?
- What difference, if any, did being involved in [the project] have on your motivation and aspirations about your future?

Example questions from topic guide for focus groups and interviews with adults (adapted to be relevant to their roles)

- What was it like for you to be part of [project]?
- What did you find most useful/ relevant?
- What things, if any, got in the way of something working well?
- What may have helped in that situation?
- What things, if any, really stand out to you from the experience of doing [project]?
- How did this [CPD in creative arts activity] develop your skills and knowledge of [artistic area]?
- What things, if any, really helped you to engage with the [CPD about/ the creative arts activity for CYP]?
- How has your outlook changed, if at all, towards doing [creative arts activity] since doing [project]?

- How has this changed your practice, if at all?
- What difference has this made for the children and young people you work with, if any?
- How were you working with young people (since you engaged in the CPD/ during the project)?
- How do you think young people found working with you?
- How do you think young people found working with each other [doing creative arts activity]?
- What difference, if any, did engagement in [creative arts activities] make for young people?
- What difference if any did this experience make for young people?
- What was different, if anything about this [creative arts] space?
- What was different, if anything about the way people talked, listened, shared ideas, expressed themselves in this space?
- What was different, if anything, about the relationships that developed between people [during creative arts activity]?
- What may be different, if anything, about how young people view their future? How does this relate to their short-term view or longer-term view?