



Flux 2022 Evaluation

Arts and mental health project in Kent & Medway with overlooked groups of young people.

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BEATS BY GIRLZ



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This Flux evaluation has been conducted by Karen Pamplin Browne.



Summary Of Findings

Flux was a series of creative arts interventions that took place across Kent and Medway in 2022. Mental illness emerges early in life and the mental health impact of the covid pandemic on children and young people (CYP) is an ongoing concern. Flux enabled experiences in the arts to help improve the mental health and well-being of marginalised CYP who are at risk of self-harm, mental illness or suicide, and those more likely to face inequalities in their ability to access advice, help and risk support.¹ Flux projects included children in care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), young people at risk of offending, young people who identify as LGBTQ+, young carers, and those living in some of the most deprived postcodes in the country. Flux was led by Folkestone based national arts charity Living Words, with individual projects organised by Kent-based cultural partners - Community Art Kent, Gulbenkian and Ideas Test. Living Words was supported by an Advisory Board and by key partners and representatives from Kent and Medway mental health social and public health services, as well as initial commissioners - Artswork.²

Targets Met:

- » 319 young people took part in Flux activity across Kent.
- » 186 Arts Awards have been achieved.
- » 4 Arts Award advisors have been trained.
- » 4 celebration and sharing events were held including Flux: Fest.
- » 5 CPD events have been held and ongoing CPD support was given to practitioners.
- » 4 core cultural organisations were involved from the start.
- » 4 additional project leads ran shorter activities which came out of this strategic partnership.
- » As of March 2023, Flux has not enabled Living Words to strengthen its longer-term strategic leadership.

¹Groups included CYP identified by NHS Kent and Medway as at risk: https://www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/application/files/8616/3284/5623/KM_CYP_MH_Plan_2021_FINAL.pdf, p12-13

²Beatrice Prosser-Snelling supported Flux throughout in her role as the Artswork Representative.

Improving Mental Health & Wellbeing through the Arts

There is extensive evidence supporting the use of arts engagement to improve wellbeing and participatory arts activity in adolescence is *'associated with reductions in a range of behaviours perceived as negative... enhances self-confidence, sense of self-worth, personal value and may build self-acceptance, and can enhance self-esteem and help develop and appreciate their self-identity.'*³ Flux project members⁴ explored the arts as a tool for improving their mental health with the help of professional creative practitioners, utilising a range of art forms and approaches to encourage engagement and improve the mental health and wellbeing of project members.⁵ Practitioners' wellbeing was supported by Living Words through supervision sessions. CYP voices mattered - they co-created Flux and felt heard and valued which helped increase their confidence and improve their self-esteem. Signposters provided a vital role in giving CYP personal support and signposting to health services, allowing practitioners to focus on delivery.

Below are key themes that allowed project members to make improvements in their wellbeing and mental health through Flux:⁶

- » Using Art as a way of expressing themselves
- » Being given space to talk about their feelings and ideas
- » Being heard
- » Feeling safe
- » Given opportunities to share with others
- » Normalising talking about mental health and wellbeing
- » Meeting other young people who share similar experiences
- » Meeting health and wellbeing needs that many weren't accessing elsewhere
- » Having adults who advocated for them
- » Being in control of their own creative outputs

³ Bone, JK & Fancourt, D. 2022. Arts, Culture & the Brain: A literature review and new epidemiological analyses. London: Arts Council England p.7

⁴ Project Members are the young people who took part.

⁵ See the INTRODUCTION for detailed descriptions of the projects.

⁶ Analysis across all feedback received from young people, practitioners and project partners.

Sharing their experiences and artwork allowed others to see the young people as role models, celebrate their creative outputs, raise awareness and see the value of art in the context of mental health and wellbeing. Flux was championed at conferences, sharing events and on social media. A film about self-harm was made as part of Flux which is available on the BBC Ideas website. The final sharing event, Flux: Fest, was highly successful and young people championed the work, showing what they had created and what the project had meant for them. Arts Award was a significant achievement for some project members, though was challenging to run in some settings. Four new Arts Award Advisers have been trained to allow Arts Award to be embedded in new settings and offer young people more opportunities in the future.

Partnerships and Cross-Sector Working

Flux partners met regularly to record progress, issues and achievements, and the ongoing cross-sector advisory board support was important to ensure the needs of the young people were met. Ideas Test's attendance at Medway's Self-harm Prevention Network meetings helped identify project members at risk of gang involvement and signpost support. Pre-existing relationships between project managers and schools/groups aided the quick setup of projects but it is recognised that these connections could be lost if individual people move on, so ongoing networking is essential. In schools, the academic year and curriculum restraints didn't always fit project timetables, whereas community groups often had more flexibility. Not all projects went ahead as planned, due in part to the covid pandemic, which had a knock-on impact on workload and budget. Living Words led Flux very successfully as the anchor organisation, bringing their prior experience on board to ensure the co-designed branding and internal communications enabled strong cohesion across the projects. Flux was complex and the timeframe for getting the project established post-funding was short. Project managers had intense workloads and having a paid project coordinator for Flux was vital, as was having Living Words manage Flux: Fest to allow project partners to focus on project delivery and project members. Arts partners highlighted issues with short-term funded projects such as Flux. The pandemic has left many arts organisations including Living Words uncertain of their future and in order for legacy planning and delivery of future Flux projects, it will be necessary for a longer-term funding strategy to be implemented.

Conclusion

Flux successfully used the arts to improve the mental health and wellbeing of over 300 children and young people from marginalised groups in Kent and Medway. Utilising existing connections allowed Flux to start quickly and reach at-risk groups in local communities that research shows are more likely to face inequalities in their ability to access advice, help and risk support. The guidance of health experts was crucial to ensure Flux could properly support the needs of the project members. The use of signposters ensured young people's voices were heard, were appropriately signposted and allowed practitioners to focus on session delivery. Supervision sessions for practitioners ensured a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The use of arts helped normalise discussions around mental health and wellbeing and Flux created creative spaces where CYP felt safe expressing their feelings and ideas through art and had control over what they made and shared. Creating high-quality sharing events like Flux: Fest and sharing online celebrated the work and showed CYP that they have value to others and also shared mental health and wellbeing content with wider audiences. Most project members had an opportunity to undertake an Arts Award which improved educational and self-confidence outcomes and the training of four new Arts Award advisors enables this to continue in a number of community-based projects.

Flux has not yet enabled Living Words to strengthen its longer-term strategic leadership. Feedback highlighted issues that the project-by-project funding model has for arts organisations. Flux was a complex project with a large workload, short planning timeframe and tight budget. Living Words did not have time to focus on future funding which makes legacy planning difficult and continuity isn't guaranteed. Post-pandemic, many arts organisations are struggling and some may not be able to continue. Whilst Flux shows how successful creative arts interventions can be for supporting the wellbeing and mental health of marginalised young people, Flux has not yet resulted in a strategic step change that will allow local partnerships to grow and continue Flux.

Recommendations

- » Find longer-term sustainable funding to allow arts organisations to run arts and health programmes expanding on learning from the Flux.
- » Build in more time and budget for developing partnerships and project planning and managing changes during the project which may well occur.
- » Embed the use of signposters in projects to enable personal support and referral to mental health services if needed, and allow practitioners to focus on delivery.
- » Include mental health supervision sessions for practitioners as standard in future arts and mental health projects, to support the wellbeing of all those involved and safeguard against burnt out.
- » Ensure funding is in place to facilitate ongoing public engagement with Flux through sharing of Flux books, films and music, and through sharing evaluation findings across sectors.
- » Embed regular opportunities for cross-sector networking in arts, education, community and health sectors to share best practice, install the value of the arts within public and social care and fully realise opportunities. This would avoid reliance on specific individuals within organisations to ensure the continuity of relationships between organisations and sectors.
- » Develop differentiated arts projects that respond to the needs of marginalised young people utilizing the diverse ways that art can support mental health and wellbeing.



Zine-artwork in Flux: Community Art Kent at Pie Factory Music



Zine-artwork in Flux: Community Art Kent at Quarterdeck Youth Hub



Flux: Gulbenkian with KRAN (Kent Refugee Action Network), Osama and Emma



Flux: Ideas Test led by Da Base Music at Victory Academy

Introduction

The **Flux** pilot project was a series of creative arts interventions aimed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of marginalised children and young people who are more at risk of self-harm, worsening mental health or suicide. Creative interventions were delivered by cultural partners with support from mental health, social and public health experts. The Flux project signposted young people to local public health services. Project members⁷ worked directly with professional artist practitioners to support their work and had an opportunity to undertake an Arts Award as an outcome of the project. The end-of-project sharing event, Flux: Fest, was held in Folkestone at the close of the project to celebrate the work created by young people.

List of projects:

Community Art Kent, run by Charlotte Chapman, specialises in participatory approaches and community engagement. Charlotte worked with a group of 14-18 year-olds at Pie Factory Music in Ramsgate and young carers⁸ at Dover SmART Project in Dover. A project with artist Zo Defferary was also started at Quarterdeck, Margate, but was unable to be completed.⁹ Project members explored poster making, poetry, comic strips and analogue photography to express themselves creatively; developed their own content and edited and made zines that touched on the subject of mental health and wellbeing. They collectively created the 'Together Zine' for instance, which they shared with their peers.

Gulbenkian is the University of Kent Arts Centre in Canterbury. They ran process-based drama workshops with young refugees aged 14-25 from KRAN (Kent Refugee Action Network) and with children and young people from Spring Lane Neighbourhood Centre. Workshops aimed to create safe spaces, were process-based, explored communication and body language and encouraged playfulness and fun.

Ideas Test is a Creative People and Places project, which works to enable and support communities across Medway and Swale to live more creative lives. They developed two projects for Flux. The first was a music project run by Da Base Mu-



⁷ 'Project members' are young people who took part in projects.

⁸ A young carer is someone under 18 years who cares for a family member or friend who has a physical or mental health condition, or misuses substances.

⁹ See Partnerships and Cross-Sector working in Arts and Health section for more detail.

sic Centre at Victory Academy in Chatham. Young people in Years 8-10, many of whom were from the Roma and Eastern European communities, wrote lyrics and recorded music videos which the autumn group screened at Flux: Fest. The second project took place at Will Adams PRU¹⁰ in Gillingham where the site-specific theatre company Dante or Die worked with teachers to create projects in class where pupils created characters and stories through acting, podcasts, playlists and artworks.



Flux: Ideas Test led by Da Base Music at Victory Academy

Living Words, an arts and literature charity, worked with young people aged 18-25 in Folkestone who self-identify as LGBTQIA+ and explored their relationship with themselves and how the language they use impacts that relationship. Living Words developed three Living Warriors projects using their Listen Out Loud creative methodology, which brings two people together, one to speak and one to write. Together they co-created individualised word books. Books with compilations of their words were published by Living Words. Some project members shared their lived experiences through film, spoken word, song, artworks, and speaking at events.¹¹ This includes the Living Words commission for a BBC Ideas short documentary 'Overcoming Self-Harm.'¹²



Living Warriors: Flux internal sharing at Folkestone Library

Beats by Girlz are a global music organisation represented locally by Florence Glen, who worked with a 14-year-old girl who lives in a care facility. Beats by Girlz came on board after Marlowe Theatre withdrew from delivering as part of Flux. Beats by Girlz are known for making music as accessible as possible for women and gender-expansive individuals, by using minimal equipment and at low costs. Florence worked one-to-one with the project member, focusing on songwriting that was led by the girl's love of Drill music and her creative constructions of lyrics. A portion of the Drill music produced was played at Flux: Fest where the project member reflected on stage about the process. Due to challenges in the project member's personal circumstances, the project had to finish early but Living Words remain in contact to enable her to have involvement in suitable projects in the future.

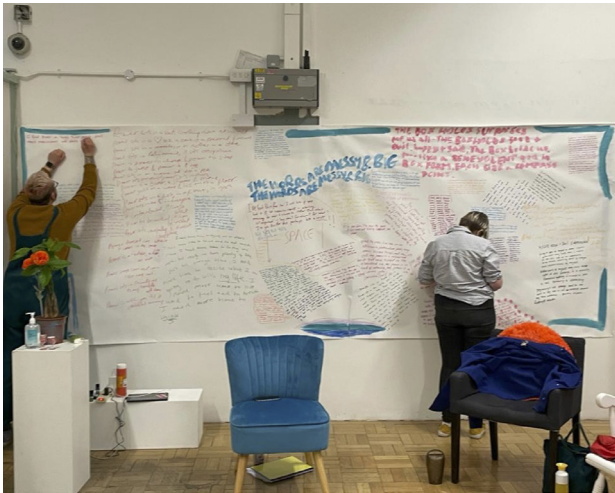
¹⁰ Pupil referral units (PRUs) are Alternative Provision (AP) for pupils who aren't able to attend mainstream school. Pupils may have been excluded, are waiting for a mainstream school place or have illness that means they cannot attend a mainstream setting.

¹¹ Eg. Folkestone Pride, project sharing events, Flux: Fest.

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/how-i-overcame-self-harm/p0dp35w0>



Artwork in Flux: Ideas Test led by Dante or Die at Will Adams Academy



Flux: Living Words at Living Warriors: Flux hub (Folkestone Library) * Living Words led their own Flux project called Living Warriors: Flux*



Flux: Beats by Girlz session led by Florence Glen

Secondary Schools Workshops were held at schools in Dover and Folkestone with Years 9-10. Workshop 1 ran at Christchurch Academy, Dover, and Turner Free School, Folkestone, at the end of the summer term. It gave young people creative intervention experiences that supported well-being and opportunities for sharing with others. They did zine making, ink, painting, voice workshops, writing on walls, and creative listening and looked at ways to support mental health during the holidays. At Turner Free School the workshop linked to the school's community outreach programme and took place on their community day. Pupils publicly displayed their wellbeing focused artworks in Folkestone Town Hall windows. Workshop 2 took place at Turner Free School for 15 pupils identified by the school as in need of the opportunity and in receipt of pupil premium.¹³ The workshop explored anxiety using drama, sound and word. An audio piece created on the day was shared at Flux: Fest.



Schools led by Living Words + Gulbenkian at Turner Free School

Shepway Youth Hub came late to Flux due to Flux: Fest taking place at Quarterhouse, rather than at The Marlowe, as had been originally planned. Quarterhouse was known to Living Words, having been partners on past festivals. However, the building does not encourage engagement from the local Roma young people who are often on the building's doorstep.¹⁴ Living Words felt strongly that the celebration for overlooked young people could not take place in a building if an overlooked group on its doorstep would not be allowed entry. Living Words realised then that they must engage with that group, and connected to a project run by Shepway Youth Hub and led by Folkestone-based artists Manuel Vason (performance photographer), Randolph Matthews (musician) and Michaela Cisarikova (dancer). Maria Panteli at Shepway Youth Hub facilitated relationship building and engagement, enabling this to happen. The group were working already with young people from the local community in Harbour Ward¹⁵ of Folkestone through photography, music and dance, to create a film. Young people from the project came to and performed as part of Flux: Fest, the relationship is still building and Living Words are supporting subsequent participation by some of the young people in a Normal? Festival of the Brain event later in 2023.

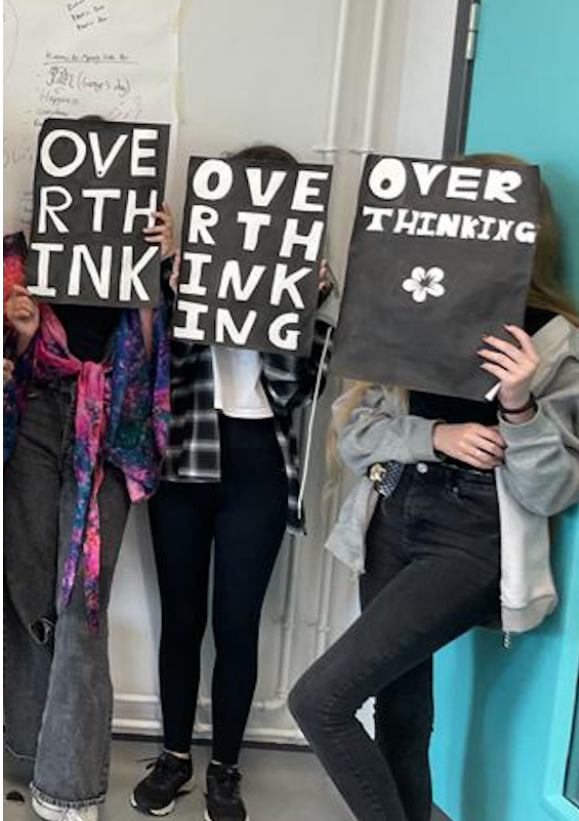


Flux:Fest performance by Shepway Youth Hub member

¹³ Pupil Premium is government funding to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools in England.

¹⁴ Feedback received by Living Words from the local community.

¹⁵ Harbour Ward is ranked as one of the 20% most deprived areas in England, has proportionally more children and young people, lower levels of educational achievement compared to other parts of the district. (Shepway Ward Profile 2015)



Living Warriors: Flux sharing/Folkestone Pride event at Folkestone Library



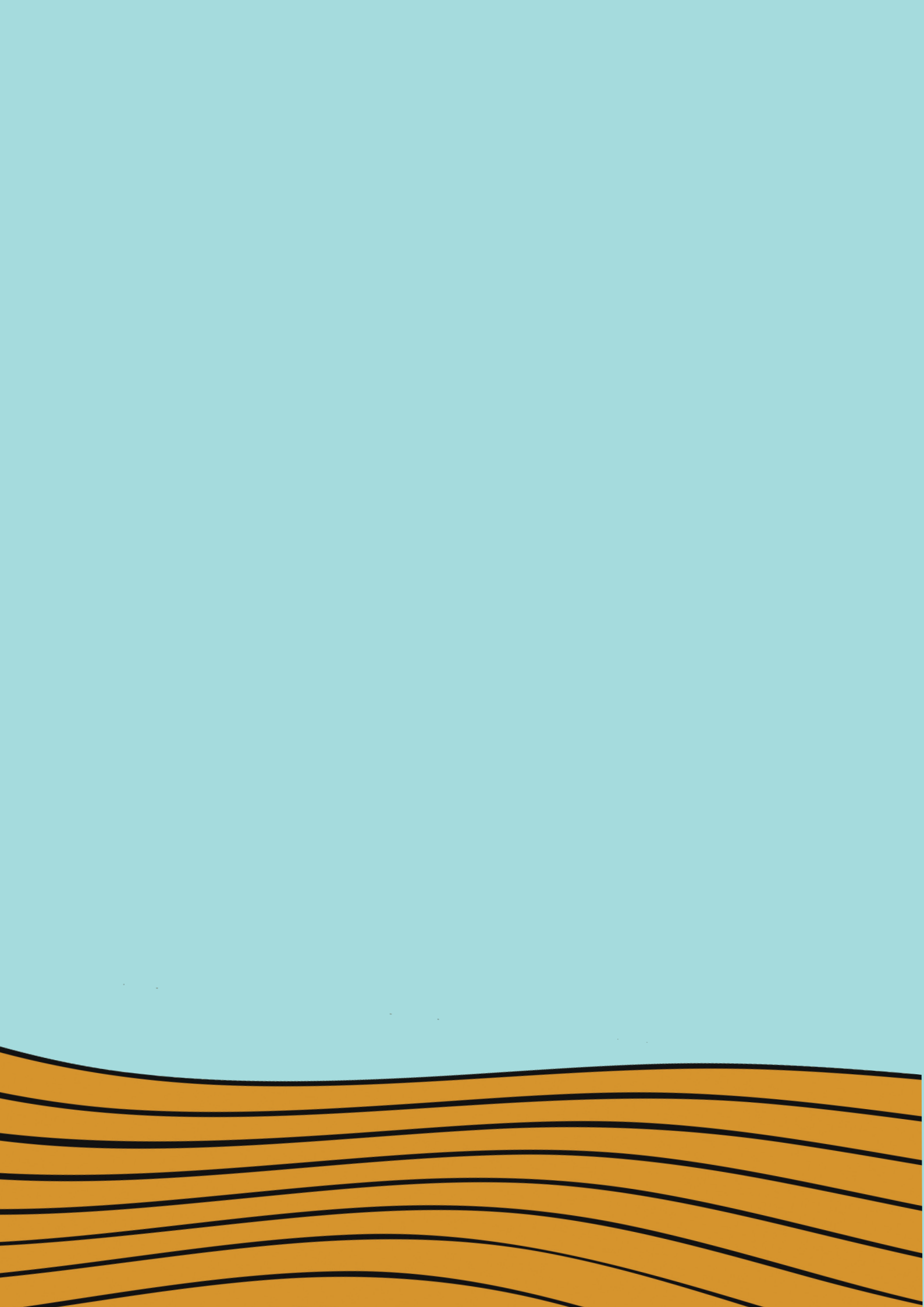
Work from Flux: Schools session led by Living Words + Community Art Kent, at Turner Free School presented in Folkestone Town Council windows



Living Warriors: Flux sharing/Folkestone Pride event at Folkestone Library



Flux: Fest act by Randolph Matthews (Shepway Youth Hub practitioner), with Flux: Fest hosts Josie Carter and Samuel Mansell. With DJ 2LA and visual minutes artist Julia Miranda on each side.



Mental Health and risk of Self-Harm & Suicide in Children and Young People

It is known that mental illness emerges early in life and that the mental health impact of the covid pandemic on children and young people has been significant¹⁶ and is an ongoing concern.

- » Mental illness emerges early in life. Globally, mental health difficulties start before the age of 14 in one third of individuals, by 18 years in almost half, and before 25 in half.¹⁷
- » Rates of probable mental health conditions have increased in 7 to 19 year olds in England. It was estimated to be 1 in 9 or 10 in 2017. Now, it's 1 in 6 for 7 to 16 year olds. (Five in every classroom.) And 1 in 4 for young people aged 17 to 19.¹⁸
- » Boys aged 6-10 are much more likely to have a mental health condition than girls (nearly double). This pattern reverses in 17 to 23 year olds, with rates twice as high in young women. There is a less significant difference among 11 to 16 year-olds.¹⁹
- » Children and young people are more likely to have poor mental health if they experience some form of adversity, such as poverty, parental separation or financial crisis; where there is a problem with the way their family functions; or their parents already have poor mental health.²⁰
- » Self-harm is one of the strongest predictors of suicide.²¹
- » "Intentional self-harm; and event of undetermined intent" was the leading cause of death for both males and females aged 5-19 (and 20-34) in England and Wales in 2021.²² Also, in Kent and Medway (2018-2020).
- » 1,145 children and young people (aged under 18) in the UK died by suicide in (the eleven years) 2010-20.²³ A yearly average of 104 deaths. One every three days.

Young adults moving from the child to adult mental health systems can find the process challenging. During the transition, emerging health needs can be missed and there can be a lack of advice and support, especially for marginalised young people.²⁴ With mental distress continuing to rise, there is an increasing demand for

16 https://www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/application/files/8616/3284/5623/KM_CYP_MH_Plan_2021_FINAL.pdf / Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2022: Wave 3 follow up to the 2017 survey - NHS Digital

17 Solmi M., Radua J., Olivola M. et al. *Age at onset of mental disorders worldwide: large-scale meta-analysis of 192 epidemiological studies*. *Mol Psychiatry* 27, 281-295 (2022). [<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-021-01161-7>]

18 NHS Digital (2022). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022 – wave 3 follow-up to the 2017 survey.

19 Local Government Association (2022). Children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health – facts and figures. [CYP emotional wellbeing and mental health facts and figures | Local Government Association]

20 Ibid. (Local Government Association, (2022)

21 Royal College of Psychiatrists, College Report CR229, 2020. *Self-harm and suicide in adults*. [RPsych CR229 Self-harm and suicide in adults]

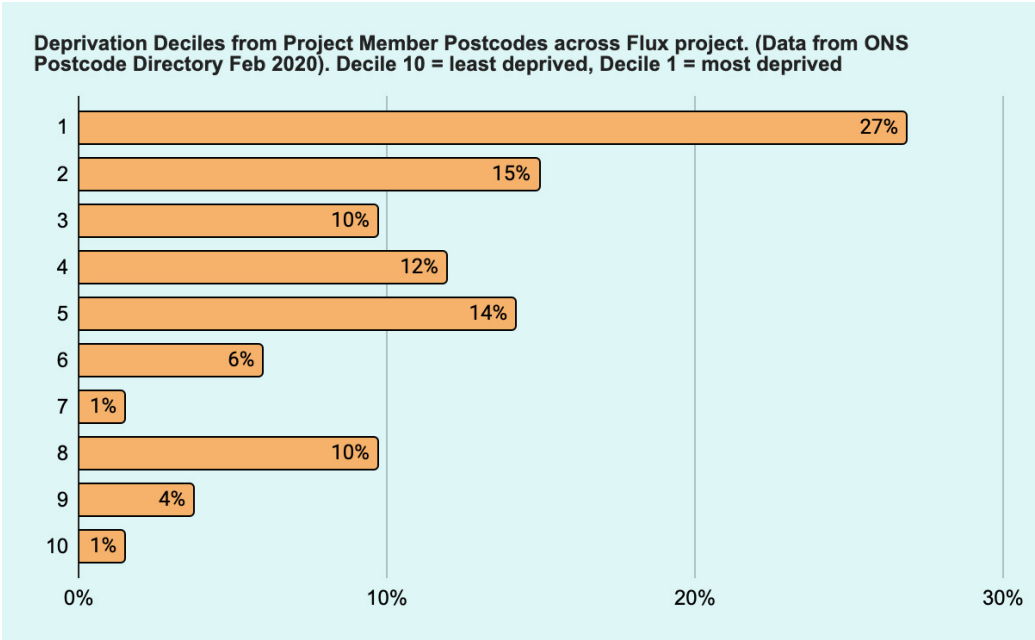
22 Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 1 July 2022, *Deaths registered in England and Wales: 2021*. Section six 'Leading causes of death'. [Available at ONS Registered deaths 2021]

23 National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health. Annual Report 2023: UK patient and general population data 2010-2020. 2023. University of Manchester. [NCISH Annual Report 2023]

24 Zena Watson, Project Manager: Children's Mental Health Commissioning in Kent and Medway

interventions focusing on Children and Young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Kent and Medway’s Local Transformation Plan 2021²⁵ evidenced that certain cohorts of children and young people are known to have higher rates of mental illness than others and are more likely to face inequalities in their ability to access advice, help and risk support. Below is a list of some of these at-risk groups that worked on Flux projects (and it is likely there is intersectionality for many project members):

- » Looked After Children / Children in Care (*Beats by Girlz*)
- » Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) (*Gulbenkian*)
- » Young offenders (*Ideas Test and others projects worked with those at risk of offending*)
- » Young LGBTQ+ people (*Living Warriors and other projects*)
- » Women aged 17 to 22 years (*across projects*)
- » Young Carers (*Community Art Kent*)
- » Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)²⁶ (*across projects*)
- » Children and young people who experience social isolation (*across projects*)
- » People from high deprivation areas have the highest mental illness rates but also experienced the biggest mental illness prevalence increase from 2017 to 2020. 27% of Flux project members were from the most deprived decile 1 postcodes.²⁷



25 https://www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/application/files/8616/3284/5623/KM_CYP_MH_Plan_2021_FINAL.pdf

26 Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are highly stressful and potentially traumatic events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. ACEs impact a child’s development, of their relationships with others, and increase the risk of engaging in health-harming behaviours and experiencing poorer mental and physical health outcomes in adulthood. <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/understanding-trauma-and-adversity/>

27 Postcode data was given for 56% of all project members. Data from the ONS Postcode Directory 2020

Arts, Mental Health and Wellbeing

In their 2022 literature review, Bone & Fancourt²⁸ found that people in deprived areas were less likely to engage in cultural activities but would benefit more from cultural engagement in terms of their mental wellbeing compared to individuals in less deprived areas. The HEartS Survey showed that *'more arts engagement was associated with higher levels of wellbeing, social connectedness, and lower odds of intense social loneliness.'*²⁹ Bone & Fancourt wrote that *'Adolescents and young adults are at increased risk of feeling lonely and lacking social support... participating in extracurricular arts activities could enhance social support during adolescence.'* They found extensive evidence supporting the use of arts engagement to improve wellbeing. They highlight that engagement in participatory arts activity, including visual arts, dance programmes, and music, singing, and drama in adolescence is *'associated with reductions in a range of behaviours perceived as negative including externalising behaviours, reportedly antisocial or criminalised behaviours, and substance use, enhances self-confidence, sense of self-worth, personal value and may build self-acceptance, and can enhance self-esteem and help develop and appreciate their self-identity.'*³⁰ Music participation and listening have been seen to reduce levels of cortisol and help reduce stress and reduce inflammatory markers.³¹

Organised NHS mental health services can't reach everyone and there has *'been a decline in youth service type provision... there's a whole pathway in between no help and CAMHS that children or young people could actually be accessing.'*³² In order to reduce the risk of self-harm and suicide it's vital that more young people are signposted to mental health support and have opportunities to access activity that promotes wellbeing. The Arts can offer a different approach that can reach communities in a *'non-threatening or normalising'* way. *'You've got to do different things to get different results and Arts and Health might be one of those different things... reaching into communities on their doorsteps.'*³³

28 Bone, JK & Fancourt, D. 2022. Arts, Culture & the Brain: A literature review and new epidemiological analyses. London: Arts Council England p.15

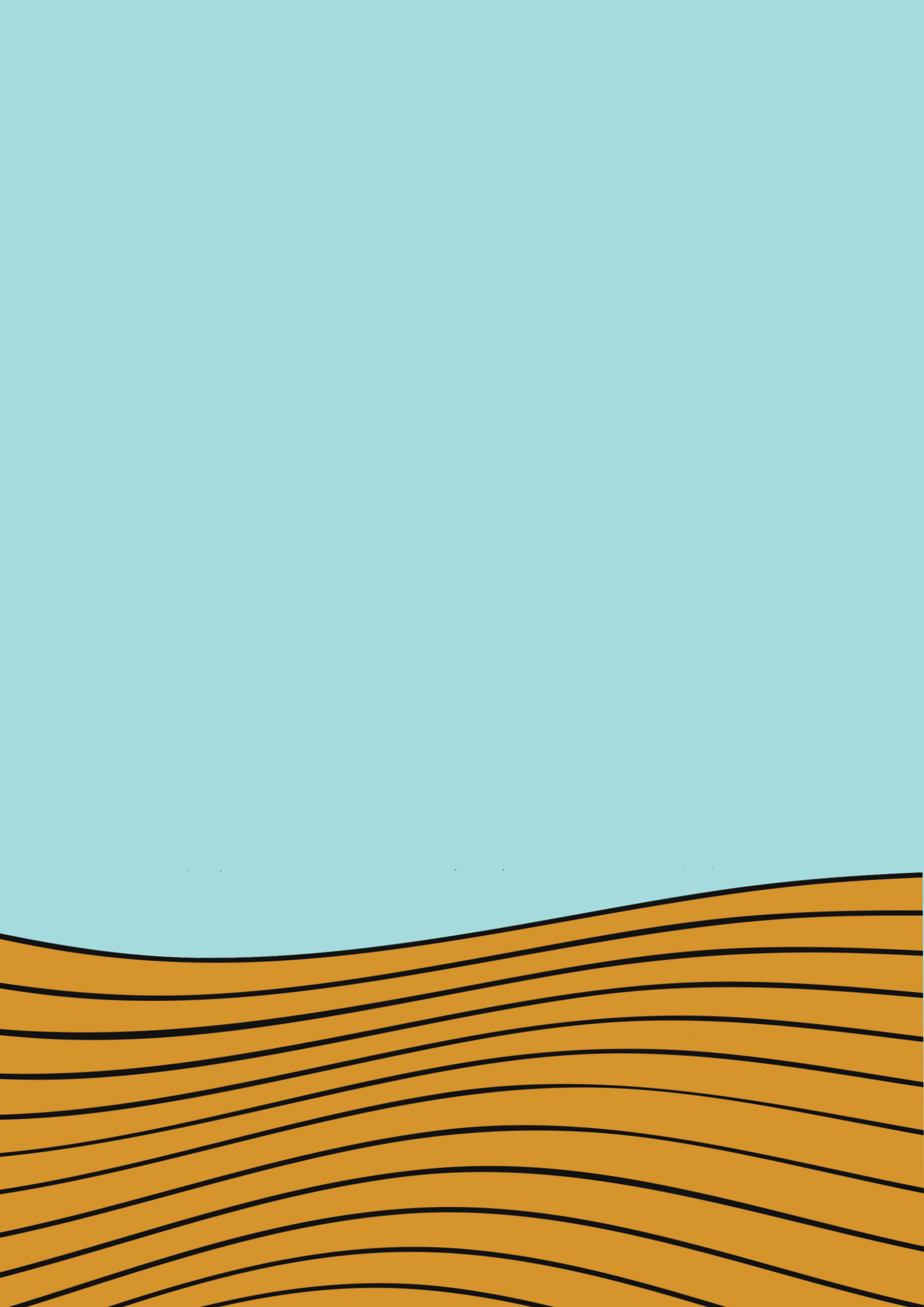
29 HEartS Survey <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0246078>

30 Bone, JK & Fancourt, D. 2022 p.7

31 Bone, JK & Fancourt, D. 2022 p.17

32 Evaluation interview, Tim Woodhouse, Kent and Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme Manager 14.11.2022

33 Evaluation interview, Laurretta Kavanagh, LK Consulting, 18.11.2022



Evaluation of Flux 2022

Aims, Outcomes & Achievements

Evaluation aim:

This evaluation tells the story of Flux, illustrates the value it has had to stakeholders and how Flux has helped improve the mental health and wellbeing of project members.³⁴

FLUX main aim:

- » CYP improve mental health and wellbeing and develop projects that aim to lower risk of self-harm and suicide

How the following have helped achieve the main aim above:

- » Signpost to social and health services
- » CYP voices matter (increased agency, coproduction)
- » CYP as role models and champion this way of working
- » Arts Award as a tool for educational achievement and to build self-confidence
- » Partnerships/cross-sector working in Arts and Health

Expected Outcomes:

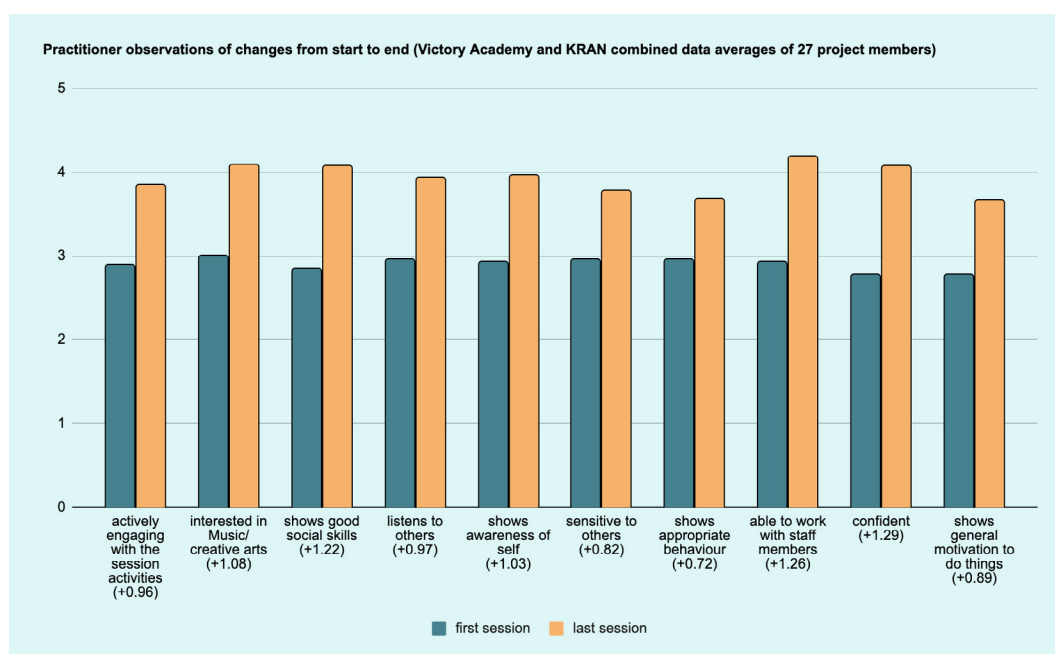
- » At least 150 children and young people, particularly those who are socially excluded, marginalised, in areas of significant deprivation, or in areas historically underserved by cultural investment, will achieve improved mental health and well-being outcomes – specifically being at lower risk of self-harm and suicide.
- » Children and young people will achieve improved educational and self-confidence outcomes by achieving the Arts Award
- » Children and young people will experience increased agency in designing and producing place and asset-based solutions to support post-pandemic recovery (there will be some sort of co-produced creative output)
- » Programme impact will result in a strategic step change and allow local partnerships to grow and continue the work this programme starts
- » The detailed evaluations³⁵ of the programme will add to the national evidence base about the ability of creative arts interventions to deliver mental health outcomes

³⁴ See appendix for evaluation methodology.

³⁵ Sussex University is completing the Artswork Mental Health Partnership evaluation which covers four regional projects in the south of England, with Flux being one of the projects. This evaluation focuses on Flux in Kent & Medway.

Achievements:

Targets	Achievements
150 young people take part in creative interventions that improve their mental health	319 young people took part in Flux activity.
150 Arts Awards delivered	186 Arts Awards have been achieved.
3 Arts Award advisers trained	4 Arts Award advisers have been trained.
2 celebration/sharing events	4 celebration and sharing events have been held (Flux: Fest, Living Warriors Sharing at Folkestone Library, Pie Factory Music Sharing, Folkestone Pride).
2 Continued Professional Development (CPD) events	5 CPD events have been held and ongoing CPD support was given to practitioners.
4 cultural organisations commit to a strategic partnership	4 core cultural organisations were involved from the start. 4 additional project leads ran shorter activities which came out of this strategic partnership.
Living Words strengthens its strategic leadership	As of March 2023, Flux has not enabled Living Words to strengthen its longer-term strategic leadership.



Improving Mental Health & Wellbeing

Flux aimed to help young people to improve their mental health and wellbeing and lower the risk of self-harm and suicide. The above data sample illustrates that practitioners at Victory Academy and KRAN observed improvements in all areas asked on the Sussex University distance-travelled reports.³⁶ General feedback indicates that this was the case for most Flux project members.

Each project was unique. Project managers and practitioners framed projects in different ways to utilise different artforms and approaches. All Flux projects created safe spaces for young people to explore, open up, and share their feelings and ideas through creative processes and outputs. As one young person explained, *'Some people struggle with expressing their emotions with words. So we have like our painting, drawing music, singing, even playing an instrument can help express anything that you want to without having to actually speak to someone about it.'* Another said *'I find it difficult to talk to people and just tell them my feelings so I put it into music instead.'*³⁷ Music-making made one young person feel happier: *'Well, it's like a ball of emotions bottled up and as soon as I put it into lyrics is just a relief, like, the chips are off my shoulder, like I can put anything into a song and it can just make me feel like just, I don't know, happier again.'*³⁸ A Living Warriors project member wrote: *'How easily I was able to get to such an authentic space to share freely and feel safe to do so.'*³⁹ At KRAN the signposter observed how Flux gave the young refugees *'that space to be a child and to laugh and feel safe around adults.'*⁴⁰ Young people were supportive of each other: *'How alone I thought I was - how alone it seems I'm not!'*⁴¹ A school workshop project member said *'it was very relieving, writing everything that just kind of letting everything out.'*⁴² Living Warriors project members said, *'The project allowed me to be more empathetic towards myself'*⁴³ and *'It helped me see myself in a better light, have self-acceptance, I am happier now.'*⁴⁴

One person self-declared as being under 25 but was slightly older. On finding out, the steering group carefully considered any possible safeguarding implications and the needs of that project member. They also acknowledged that *'many people in the 25-28 bracket will have missed out on services geared towards 18-25 year-olds during the pandemic and will potentially be at higher risk.'*⁴⁵ It was decided that it was appropriate for this project member to continue in the project.

36 This evaluation had access to a small dataset of 27 completed questionnaires which were carried out by Sussex University for their Artsworld Mental Health Partnership evaluation. Practitioners gave marks out of 5 to individual project members, 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*completely true*). The graphs show the average changes practitioners observed indicated from their first to last session.

37 Flux Video interviews, Victory Academy pupil clip 7

38 Flux Video interview, Victory Academy pupil clip 7

39 Living Warriors feedback form project member A - 27.4.22

40 Signposter at KRAN, interview 13.12.22

41 Living Warriors feedback form project member B - 27.4.22

42 FLUX Video interview, Turner School pupil clip 3

43 Verbal feedback, Living Warriors Project Member D, Flux: film, Nov 2022

44 Living Warriors project member feedback form 5.7.2022

45 Steering Group mtg 4 Mar 2022

Flux partners were able to advocate for young people, for example through sharing youth voices at conferences, or in personal situations such as when one project member was facing prison and a letter of support was written with the advisory board's agreement. Influenced by letters of support including the Flux letter, the judge gave the young person community service. The project member is still in touch with the Flux partner organisation that ran their project and is receiving ongoing support.⁴⁶ The wellbeing of adults involved in Flux was also important. Supervisions are wellbeing check-ins more commonly used in health and social care sectors and aren't common in art contexts. Supervision sessions were offered by Susanna Howard from Living Words after each session to the practitioners. She explained that it is vital to have this, and was included in projects, *'to ensure a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing.'*⁴⁷

Community Art Kent ran workshops with young carers who created their own zines. The sessions *'normalised talking about mental health. Which then brought with it conversations amongst the children. We saw that children use art as a form of relief without knowing that they are using it.'*⁴⁸ Charlotte, who ran the sessions, noticed how *'supportive they were of each other, that they weren't alone in how they felt and that love and kindness were important.'*⁴⁹ Dover Smart's founder wrote:

'Working with Charlotte has been inspirational her unique approach to what could be a difficult subject to raise with young people has been both effective and creative. The project has started conversations around the issues surrounding mental health. We feel that our young people as a result are better informed and feel braver talking about not only their own mental health but that of their families too. Young carers have poorer mental health than their peers so this opportunity will have changed lives "it's just a zine" we know it's not.'⁵⁰

Gulbenkian ran drama workshops with young refugees at KRAN and at Spring Lane Neighbourhood Centre, creating safe spaces and encouraging playfulness and fun. A young person from Spring Lane said *'I thought I would feel silly but it was great to be able to have fun & joke about with the others.'*⁵¹ Sessions at KRAN allowed project members *'to be themselves and have fun - something which for some of these young people doesn't happen a great deal - and communicate in ways not always dependent on their ability to speak English. The smiles, laughter, little growths in confidence, and exercises that meant they were working well with each other were huge achievements.'*⁵²

46 Susanna Howard, Artistic Director of Living Words / Flux project manager interview 10 Jan 23

47 Susanna Howard, 10 Jan 23.

48 Community partners feedback form, Dover smART Project, Jan, 2023

49 Charlotte Chapman, Community Art Kent, email, Nov, 2022

50 Dawn Foulkes, founder of Dover smART. Email to Living Words, Nov, 2022

51 Verbal feedback, Gulbenkian Project Member, at Spring Lane Neighbourhood Centre, Flux: Film November 2022

52 Emma Willatts, Gulbenkian project manager, interview 30.11.22

Through Ideas Test, Dante or Die worked with teachers at Will Adams PRU who then delivered sessions in class. Pupils invented characters, wrote stories, collated motivational soundtracks and recorded imaginative podcasts. Many PRU students have had adverse childhood experiences and are from marginalised groups.⁵³ Creating their imaginary characters was successful in allowing them to *'let their guard down'* and *'The child in them was able to come out... It was their dreams and aspirations coming through the character of someone else.'*⁵⁴ Creating motivational stories and soundtracks helped *'support their emotional wellbeing throughout the week.'* The teacher explained that PRUs have fewer opportunities to include creative activities compared to mainstream settings. They said that this project enabled them to incorporate drama, sound and music, so working with *'outside agencies bringing opportunities that [pupils] just wouldn't get... it's essential, we need more of it. We really do, I think all PRUs need more of it.'*⁵⁵

Florence from Beats by Girlz worked with one girl in state care with adverse childhood experiences who wrote and recorded music. The young person took to the stage and spoke to the audience about her experience of Flux and the music, which was played at Flux: Fest. Her carer wrote: *'I am again very grateful for [the young person] having this opportunity as this has given her a confidence boost and given her the tools to build her self-esteem as well as her confidence.'*⁵⁶

Secondary Schools Workshops in Dover and Folkestone supported wellbeing through creative activities. A second workshop in Folkestone explored anxiety through drama, sound and word. In the summer sessions, pupils were given tools and strategies to help manage their wellbeing over the summer holidays. The Head of School at Turner Academy said that pupils are still dealing with the aftermath of COVID and dealing with *'expectations, stress and worry around exams and studying.'* She said Flux helped pupils with *'thinking about their own wellbeing, recognising their own feelings, and recognising some of the things that can help to relieve those stresses and pressures... these are strategies that they can take forward into their future lives.'*⁵⁷

As a legacy project, artists Manuel Vason (performance photographer), Randolph Matthews (musician) and Michaela Cisarikova (dancer) ran workshops and created a film with young people at Shepway Youth Hub which runs youth groups in a deprived area of Folkestone. They performed a dance at Flux: Fest⁵⁸ and their end-of-project sharing will take place as part of a Normal: Festival of the Brain event later in 2023.

53 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england/> teacher feedback

54 Teacher TW, Will Adams PRU, Interview 10.1.23

55 Teacher TW 10.1.23

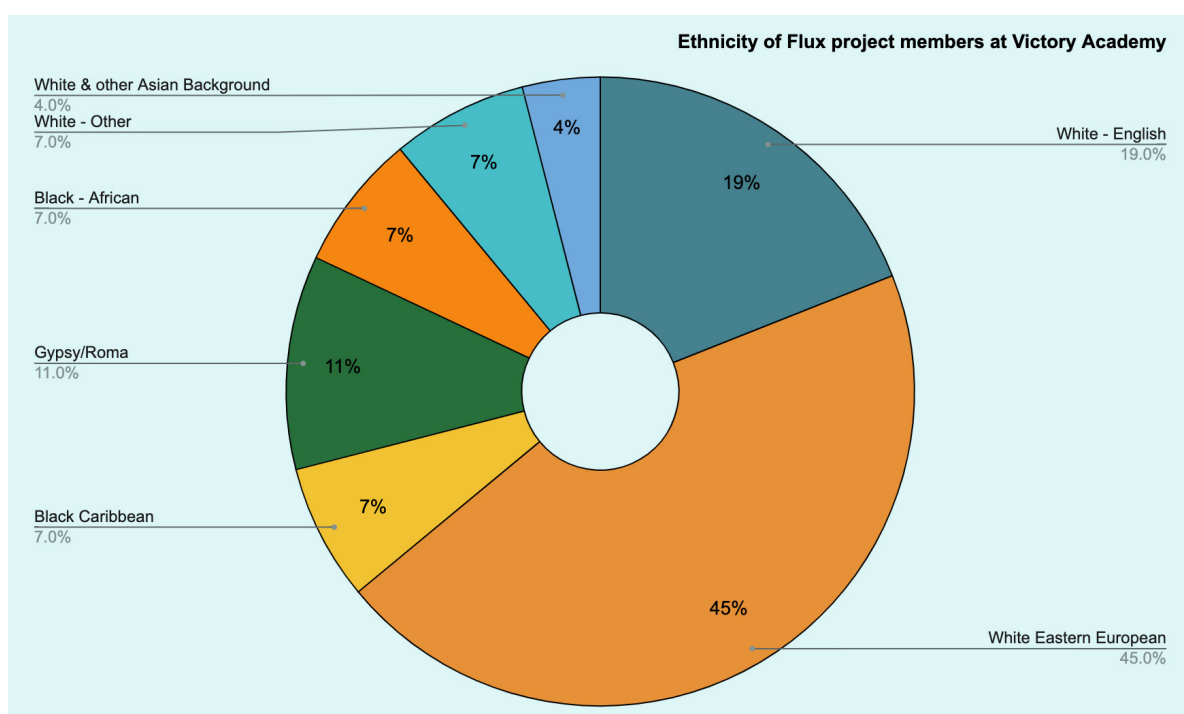
56 Senior Residential Worker regarding Flux: Beats by Girlz via email correspondence with Living Words, Dec 2022

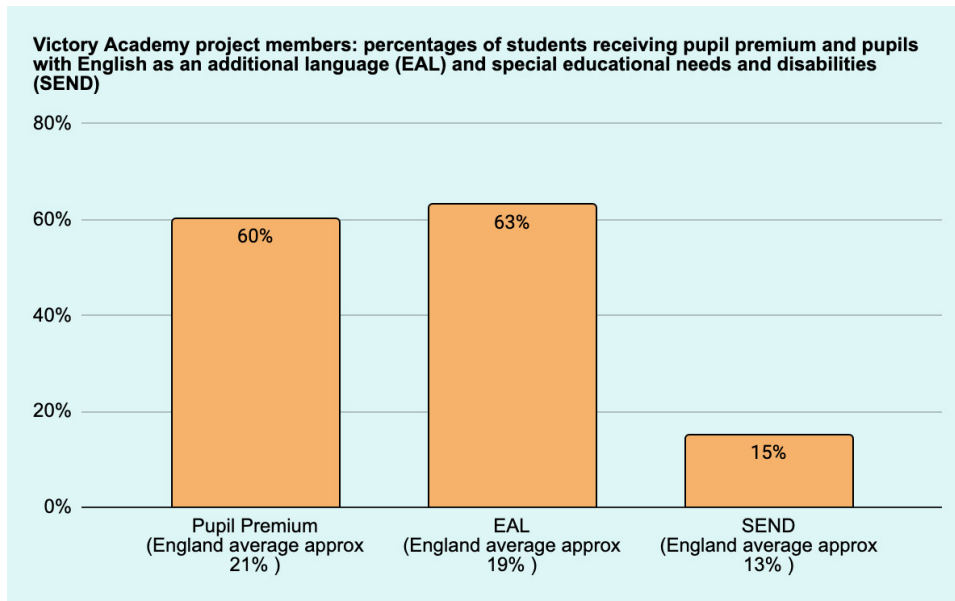
57 Jenny Van Deelen, Head of School, Turner Free School, Folkestone, Flux Video interview Victory Academy, Clip 8

58 The dance is included in the Flux: Fest film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5MxvwnEjY8&t=10s>

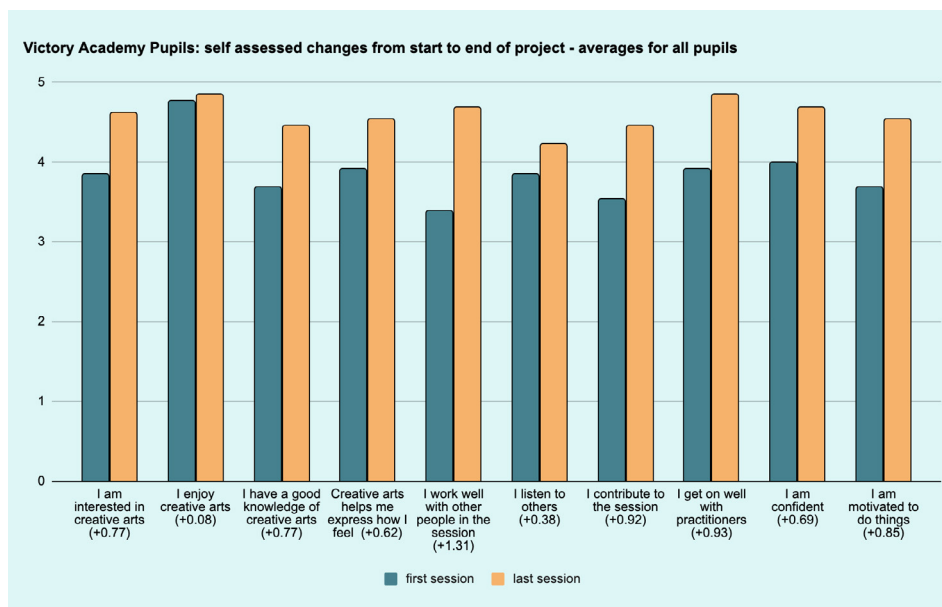
Case Study 1: Ideas Test project with DaBase Music Club at Victory Academy

Ideas Test ran music workshops at Victory Academy in Chatham. Sessions were led by practitioners from DaBase Music Club who worked with young people to write and record music. The school selected young people from marginalised groups who they hoped would benefit from arts interventions supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the pupils. This included young people from the Gypsy/Roma (11%) and Eastern European (45%) communities, those in receipt of pupil premium (60%), with English as a foreign language (63%) and some with special educational needs (15%).

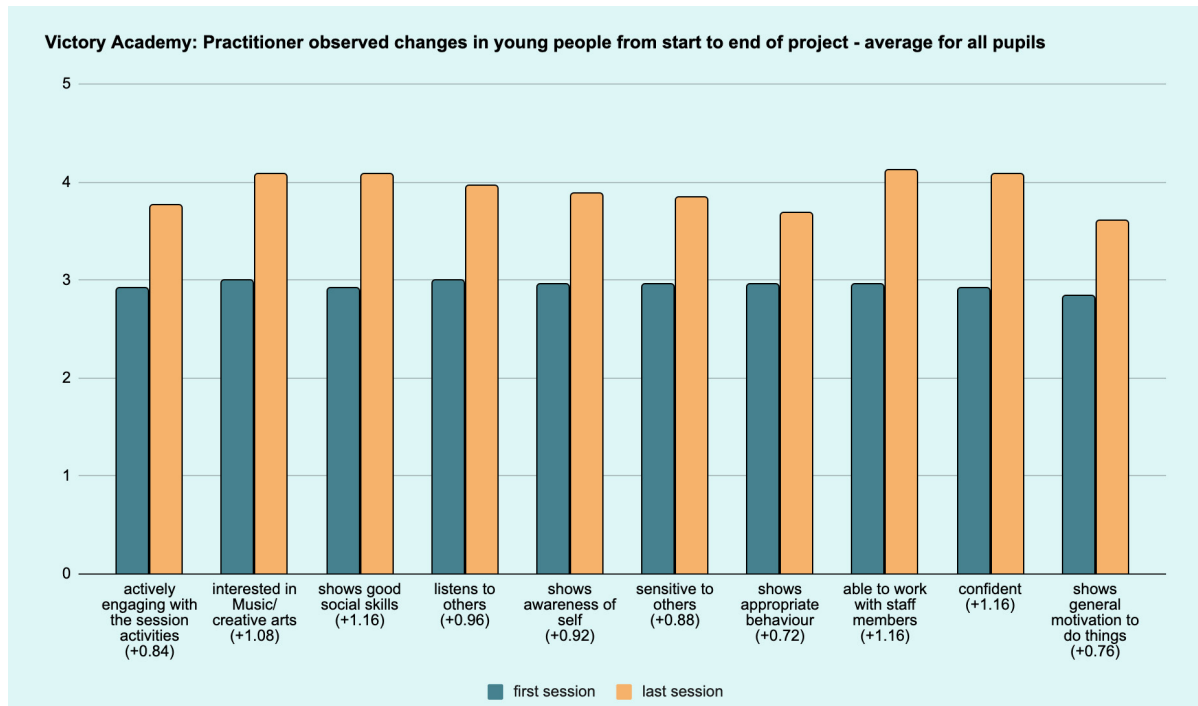




As part of the Sussex University Evaluation, project members were asked to indicate how much they think the statements on the graph below had changed from the start to the end of the project. They indicated 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*completely true*). The graphs show the average changes respondents from Victory Academy indicated from their first to last session. The '+' scores indicate how much they feel they have improved in these areas.



Similarly, practitioners were asked to indicate how much change they saw in the young people from the start to end of the project based on slightly different questions:



The charts show that the project members and practitioners on average felt they had improved across all areas, with notable improvements in social skills/working with others and working well with staff/practitioners, and young people appearing more confident by the practitioners.

Ideas Test uses an approach they describe as *'hiding the vegetables'* to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Some of the pupils were disengaging from school and are from communities that the young people said had a *'cultural distrust of engaging with services'* and anything *'overtly about mental health would deter the students they felt would most benefit.'*⁵⁹ The school identified that students were most likely to be responsive to music. The practitioner said music sessions helped young people *'boost their confidence, raise their self-esteem, and interact with peers that they wouldn't normally interact with. I think the great thing about music is that music is such a universal language. It brings people from different cultures, different backgrounds, different genders. Music can bring people together and that's exactly what happened.'*⁶⁰ The pupils were given creative freedom and agency in what they were doing which enabled them to open up about their experiences. *'It's slightly therapeutic, it's a way of getting away from bad stuff that people my age do.'*⁶¹

59 Steering Group Highlight Reports / Bryony Farrant-Davis, Ideas test interviews.

60 FLUX Video interview with practitioner Nathaniel from Da Base Music Centre.

61 Verbal feedback from Victory Academy Student, Flux: Film, Oct 2022

Their sharing of their experiences through music highlighted the extent of their vulnerabilities to the adults around them. In the summer term, the sessions were dominated by a group of boys whose lyrics and discussions highlighted concerns about their possible involvement in gangs. They had named their music group 'C-Block.' Ideas Test attended Medway network meetings where their sharing about Flux led to one of the Mental Health Leads contacting Ideas Test regarding concerns about the 'C-Block' name being linked to a local gang known to exploit young people. They were then able to put Ideas Test and Flux in contact with relevant support services. The opportunity to express themselves openly led to them receiving support and Flux gave them a positive experience of an art project where they were heard. Tim Woodhouse, Kent and Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme Manager, said that it *'highlights the fact that actually, the project is working with those kids that we really need to get to.'* He explained that some of those young people anticipated ending up in prison and that Flux gave them a different *'outlook on life.'*⁶² The school decided that the 'C-Block' song could not be shared publicly so in the second set of workshops the practitioners focused on wellbeing and aspiration and young people created a new piece of work which was performed at Flux: Fest and is available online as part of the Flux: Fest film.⁶³ Flux gave opportunities for young people to potentially see their futures differently as a result of engagement in the project, thus improving their mental health outlook.



Flux: Ideas Test led by Da Base Music at Victory Academy

62 Tim Woodhouse, Kent and Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme Manager, interview 14.11.22

63 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5MxvwnEjY8&t=10s>

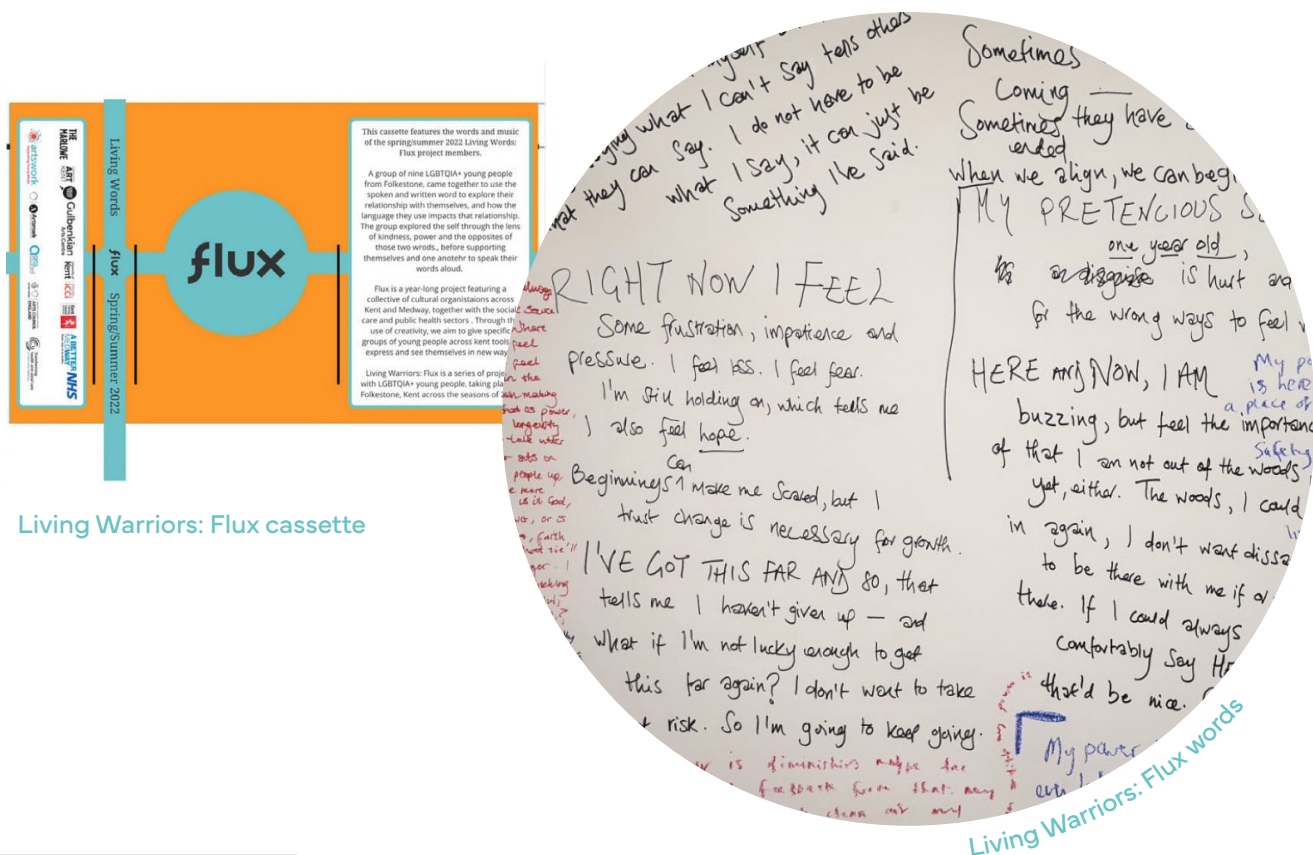
Case study 2: Living Words project

'Living Warriors'

Living Warriors was a series of Folkestone-based projects with LGBTQIA+ young people which took place in a dedicated room in Folkestone Library. Sessions happened weekly for five weeks. Each session consisted of group work/sharing, individual creative speaking, listening and writing, and working in pairs with a Living Words writer. In these pairs, the Living Words Listen Out Loud methodology was used to co-create books of each person's own words. Living Words have found that:

'Through the speaking, writing, editing - and then reading - of one's own experience, we can gain deeper processing, compassion and acceptance of our experiences. We can also learn to use language in a more supportive way, giving us more agency over our narratives.' ⁶⁴

The creative technique works in one-to-one settings with a Living Words artist listening to a person's sounds and words which are written, as they speak, and then edited with them to validate their sense of self when read back. Every project member has their own book of words, each group had a book of words published, and a compilation anthology called 'Living Warriors: Flux' was published at the end of the project and launched at Flux: Fest.



Living Warriors: Flux cassette

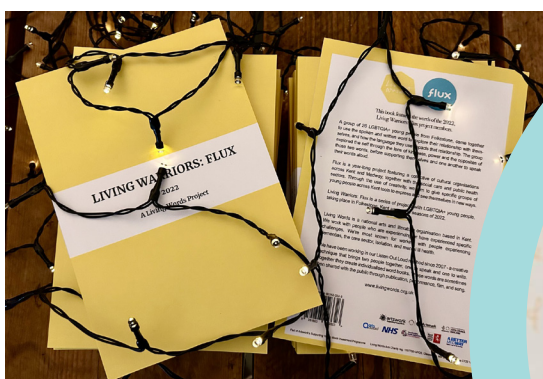
64 Living Warriors: Flux (book), Living Words, 2022

'I definitely see myself as more powerful than I did before. My book pretty much tells the story of my recent breakdown and ends on a wonderful note and I just feel like it's a snapshot of what I went through and it has a really happy ending - it's empowering.'

LIVING WARRIORS PROJECT MEMBER, 2022

Some Living Warriors project members have experience with mental health and social care systems and told practitioners that Living Warriors is *'a very different experience and one where they felt truly heard in a much deeper way.'*⁶⁵ On feedback forms the majority of project members said that Living Warriors helped them see themselves differently. One said it helped them *'to be more open and expressive in voicing my concerns with my own mental health,'*⁶⁶ another *'found more self acceptance at a time I really needed it.'*⁶⁷ A project member wrote *'I'm stronger than I thought, I feel stronger than just my dark thoughts.'* 100% of respondents said they felt heard. *'I think the most surprising thing was feeling heard no matter how much or little I spoke.'*⁶⁸

93% of Living Warriors respondents felt the project was of value to them. *'It is extremely valuable to be listened to and enabled to reflect on our thoughts always. I'm glad it was happening at the time it was.'* *'It helped me expand on the change that was occurring within myself and let me see that my words and thoughts had meaning and value.'*⁶⁹



Living Warriors: Flux anthology.

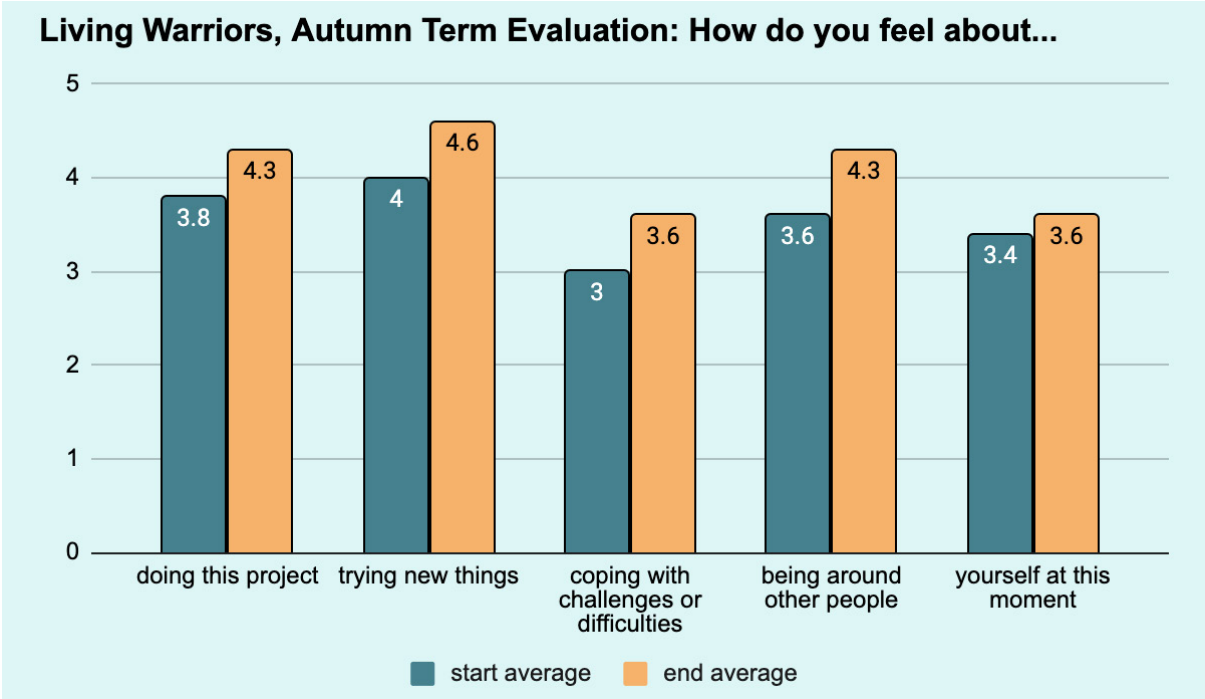


65 Living Warriors practitioner, interview 8.11.22
 66 Living Warriors Project Member feedback form, 14.11.22
 67 Living Warriors Project Member feedback form, 27.4.22
 68 Living Warriors Project Member feedback form, 1.7.22
 69 Living Warriors Project Member feedback form, 24.6.22

Evaluation questionnaires were sent out to Living Warriors participants:

Was the project of value to you?	Yes	93%
	Maybe	7%
Would you recommend the project to others?	Yes	100%
Did you feel heard by the Living Words artist you worked with?	Yes	100%
Did Living Warriors help you see yourself differently?	Yes	79%
	No	7%
	Maybe	14%
I feel my book can be a tool to help me be kinder to myself.	Strongly agree	50%
	Agree	33%
	Maybe	17%

The autumn group were asked to show an emoji from 1-5 about how they felt about doing the project, trying new things, coping with challenges, and being around people and themselves. The sample size of respondents is very small. 5 people answered at the start and only 3 people answered at the end. For these individuals, their feelings improved between the start and end of the project. Verbal and written feedback from project members and practitioners supports this limited evidence.



Respondents across all three Living Warrior sessions were asked how their book made them feel. The Word Cloud below illustrates their responses:



Children & Young People's Voices Matter

Flux built on NHS Kent and Medway's aim to acknowledge and manage the needs of young people in East Kent post-pandemic⁷⁰ by embedding youth voice and co-production in the project. Flux wanted young people to feel confident that the project belonged to them and that they were seen, heard and represented.

Practitioners ensured that project members could influence the project and had control over the work they produced and shared. *'Students do everything and they're questioned about what they want to share. The zine was the young people's voice, they decided what they shared with each other.'*⁷¹ Practitioners adapted sessions to young people's interests and situations. At Pie Factory Music, there were *'a few trans or questioning people, so there was a lot of talk around identity and support for identity.'*⁷² Young people felt heard and valued: *'I never saw myself as someone that had things of value to say and being heard in a forum and getting responses from others about my words was invaluable to me.'*⁷³ Another wrote *'I'm stronger than I thought, I feel stronger than just my dark thoughts. It's helped me expand on the change that was occurring within myself and let me see that my words and thoughts had meaning and value.'*⁷⁴ Young people grew in confidence: *'Well, the Flux project has made me more confident in myself. So I might start letting my friends hear [my music].'*⁷⁵ Another explained *'Before I did this project, I wasn't really as confident at speaking up about stuff, I've shown in a different way now. Doing this project has made me more confident to speak up when something is wrong.'*⁷⁶

Practitioners at KRAN said it was important that project members felt that their voices were heard, to focus on their interests, and that they felt safe around adults. Their futures are unknown and controlled by a system where they have little agency. They have had adverse childhood experiences and have been forced to grow up quickly. It became clear the project should not be concerned about outcomes but *'trust the process'* and focus on *'providing a consistent and safe environment where they are allowed to play and they're allowed to laugh and just be children.'* Over time project members built confidence, made suggestions for the ses-



70 https://www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/application/files/8616/3284/5623/KM_CYP_MH_Plan_2021_FINAL.pdf & Information provided by email from Zena Watson Project Manager: Children's Mental Health Commissioning 2.12.22

71 Charlotte Chapman, Community Art Kent Interview 27.10.22

72 Charlotte Chapman, interview 27.10.22

73 Verbal feedback Living Warriors project member, group sharing event, June 2022.

74 Living Warriors feedback form 26.6.22

75 FLUX Video interviews, Victory Academy pupil, clip 7

76 Verbal feedback by Victory Academy Student for the Flux: Film October 2022

sions and led some activities themselves *'which allowed them to gain that control and power over something an area in their life.'*⁷⁷ Practitioners described how two young people at KRAN had changed through Flux:

'[The young person] is far more able to work with others in groups, put forward her own ideas, and take part in activities which might make her feel/look a little silly. She is now confident enough to be competitive and say what she does/doesn't want to do.'⁷⁸

'Over the few weeks that this individual took part in the sessions, his confidence grew hugely, to the point that he was able to lead some exercises or make decisions about which way the sessions should go, despite not being confident with English at all. He started to tease the staff, and his sense of humour was given the opportunity to come to the forefront.'

Bryony Farrant-Davis, Youth Development Manager at Ideas Test wrote:

'Being Young People (YP) led & working in cocreative ways has benefited the YP's wellbeing most, especially given both groups' reluctance to engage with formal mental health provision; by giving them creative freedom they feel they have agency over the course of the project, rather than feeling like they're 'forced into' anything. For example, providing the group at Victory the freedom to shape the style/content of the music opened space to talk about their experience, highlighting the extent of their vulnerabilities to the adults around them (susceptibility to gangs). And delivering the Will Adams project in a flexible way using familiar tools (e.g. WhatsApp, Voicenotes & gaming references) enabled the teacher to engage YP at the right moment for each of them & has produced great outcomes. Students are independently sharing approaches & experiences, demonstrating new teamwork skills; have shown commitment to the project they don't have for normal lessons; have shown increased confidence, more positive attitudes & general engagement. In both contexts, we've worked with YP who have significant support needs outside of school, but often don't feel school is a positive environment/feel persecuted within school. Observations & feedback have shown that carving out a space in school where they're creatively in control (with appropriate support) has improved their attitude to both school & themselves, & the opportunity to take creative risks has proven to YP the scope of their inner potential/worth.'⁷⁹

77 Gulbenkian interview with Emma Willatts and Becky Lees, 30.11.22 / Agata Paradowska (Mental Health Signposter) interview 13.12.22

78 KRAN practitioner session report, 2022

79 Case Study feedback form, Bryony Farrant-Davis, Ideas Test 8.12.22

Young People As Role Models & Championing This Way of Working

Flux total numbers as of 6th March 2023

Project Member Numbers		Project Outputs (public/and non-public)	
Gulbenkian	22	Zines	3
Marlowe (Recruitment Session)	65	Songs/Sound Art/Spoken Word	6
Living Warriors	26	Films	5
Ideas Test	33	Artworks	49
Community Art Kent	20	Podcasts	7
Schools Workshops	139	Performances	2
Beats By Girlz	1	Characters/Story-Building	7
Shepway Youth Hub	10	Books	31
Spring Lane	3		110
	319		

Audience Figures At Public Events		Youtube / Film Screenings / Listens:	
Flux:fest Attendees	120	Overcoming Self-Harm (Youtube)	147
Folkestone Library Sharing Event	50	How I Overcome Self-Harm (BBC Ideas)	37700
Folkestone Pride Attendees	2500	Living Warriors Song Listens	47
Kent And Medway Children & Young People Suicide & Self-Harm Prevention Network Conference	100	Living Warriors Film (Youtube)	321
South Kent Mind Networking Event	150	Flux Film (Youtube)	308
The Roundhouse	30	Event Film (Youtube)	116
	2950		38639

Social Media Audiences for Flux Content		
Media:	Followers:	Reach /Impressions:
Living Words Facebook	1025	9235
Living Words Instagram	151	25331
Twitter	1481	4758
Tiktok		3159
flux.kent Instagram followers	261	N/A
	2918	42483

Flux created opportunities for 319 young people to share their experiences with each other and by sharing outputs with physical audiences. Over 2900 people saw Flux content at physical events, over 386000 have viewed Flux films, and social media has had a reach of 42483 at the time of writing.⁸⁰

This sharing allowed others to see the young people as role models, celebrate their creative outcomes, raise awareness and see the role the arts can play in improving mental health and wellbeing. Young people said they were proud of the work they made. Young people from Dover Smart said of their finished zines: *'I'll take one home and show my parents'*⁸¹ another said, *'I'll show it to everyone!'*⁸² Participating in Flux was inspiring, *'I think I really want to do more of this, get more into the arts industry, spread the word about this project, and maybe even work on my own project in the future.'*⁸³ The creative outcomes (artwork, films, zines, music, books etc) have the potential to impact audiences. The outcomes of the workshop at Turner Free School were made into posters on the theme of 'what does kindness look like to yourself?' and were displayed in Folkestone Town Hall windows for passers-by to see. Reading the words of the Living Warriors, or watching the BBC film about self-harm, can potentially help others with their own mental health as well as help signpost people to support. Living Words shared about Flux at conferences,⁸⁴ where words from project members were shared between each speaker, allowing attendees from across sectors to hear about the depth of engagement and the people Flux reached.

By showing work, Flux helped young people see that their thoughts, opinions and creative outputs are of value to others. One project member explained that Flux had helped them *'think about my words as valuable and something that could have a positive impact on someone? It made me notice the way I thought about things and that I might have things to say.'*⁸⁵



Living Warriors: Flux 'Kindness' film in-the-making



Living Warriors: Flux Folkestone Pride sharing

80 See Appendix D for a complete list of all outputs and sharing events.

81 C1 end of project evaluation discussion, Dover smART

82 C10 end of project evaluation discussion, Dover smART

83 Flux Video interview Victory Academy project member, clip 1.

84 Kent and Medway Children and Young People Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Network Conference, Oct 22

85 Living Warriors feedback form project member A 27.4.22



Flux Project Lead and Artistic Director/
Founder of Living Words, Susanna Howard,
presenting at Kent and Medway Children
and Young People Suicide and Self-harm
Prevention Network Conference

Another project member said, *'I never saw myself as someone that had things of value to say and being heard in a forum and getting responses from others about my words was invaluable to me. I also did not see myself as a person capable of speaking in front of others.'*⁸⁶ During the Flux film interviews, one project member said: *'I would really advise other children who struggle with expressing their thoughts to do this. Even if they don't really feel confident in themselves they can learn to be.'*⁸⁷ For others, seeing their peers as role models inspired them to be more confident; *'since I joined the Flux project, I saw everyone in the room laughing and joking, and I saw how confident they were compared to how I am and when they started making the lyrics, I just thought maybe, just maybe I could share it with other people. Because if they can be confident, so can I.'*⁸⁸

Flux partners stressed the importance of *'trusting the impact of what you are doing without thinking about what we think success is.'*⁸⁹ Sharing outputs as a way of defining success is common practice in art projects but, in the context of mental health and wellbeing and work that focuses on marginalised groups, it was not always possible or appropriate to share what happened. Gaining permissions for sharing output and collecting data for vulnerable groups was challenging. Both Pie Factory and Shepway Youth Hub had issues with gaining parent permissions and working with KRAN was process-led rather than outcome-led as personal information about refugees is very difficult to obtain.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Living Warriors feedback form project member B 27.4.22

⁸⁷ Flux Video interview Victory Academy project member, clip 7

⁸⁸ Flux Video interview Victory Academy project member, clip 7

⁸⁹ End of project stakeholder meeting after Flux: Fest 4.12.22

⁹⁰ Interviews with practitioners, partners/steering group highlight report form.

Some of the signposters and practitioners had lived experiences of mental health, wellbeing or being from marginalized groups themselves and were role models for the young people. One project member went on to become a signposter in a later group. A Living Warriors project member used their experience of how Flux improved their mental health as inspiration for their Master's Degree.⁹¹

Social media was used to update the wider community on Flux and as a way to raise awareness of issues around mental health and wellbeing, with a reach of over 42483 across Living Words and Flux platforms. NHS Kent and Medway recognise that there is a need to improve communications to reach more young people including via social media and raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing services.⁹² Arts content draws audiences specifically interested in the arts. Local arts organisations and community groups have their own social media following which is often targeted to a specific local area or region. Some of the project members tagged Flux in their own posts about how 'amazing' Flux had been for them.⁹³ Flux's use of social media enabled sharing of information about mental health and wellbeing to reach new and wider audiences.

Flux: Fest was the main sharing event at the end of the project, held in December 2022. 120 people attended. It enabled project members' work to be championed and for friends, family and visitors to hear what the project meant to them. Flux: Fest was organised by Living Words. There were music, artmaking, drama and photography workshops and activities run by Flux project members and practitioners. Guests watched project members and practitioners in the auditorium showcasing their different projects through film, poetry, sound, music, dance and drama. Local young people volunteered to help run Flux: Fest and served food to visitors. One volunteer used Flux as inspiration for their GCSE Dance piece, exploring mental health. Living Words utilised creative colleagues from Glassworks⁹⁴ to help with film, photogra-



Social media from Living Warriors: Flux campaign, templates created by Studio Oiseau

91 Information provided by Living Words, email 9.2.23
92 Zena Watson Project Manager: Children's Mental Health Commissioning, interview 1.12.22
93 Instagram account of a project member who tagged in Flux.
94 Living Words are based at Glassworks, a specialist space for creative and digital businesses.

Living Words gave out feedback postcards for visitors to fill in and opportunities to write comments on walls in the cafe area. The following feedback at the end of the event was collected:

- » 100% of respondents said that attending Flux:Fest made them feel better than before they arrived.
- » 93% strongly agreed and 7% agreed that Flux:Fest valued the voices of young people.
- » Audiences were asked to write down words to describe Flux:Fest. They wrote: *amazing, happy, proud, moved, inspired, enlightened, good, fantastic, amazing, ecstatic, happy, joyful.*
- » Examples of anonymous written comments included:
 - » *'I love that the Flux project has really captured the voices of young people in care.'*
 - » *'Right now I feel terrified and happy, excited, excited for todays adventure, surreal.'*
 - » *'I keep laughing cause I'm proud of myself and can't believe what I've actually done within the project.'*
 - » A visitor not involved in the project wrote: *'Really inspiring and at times moving. Will there be more projects? I work with YP and would like to know about projects taking place so I can signpost.'*
 - » After the event one of the community partners emailed to say: *'Today was absolutely amazing, it is great to see the work that has been going on with the young people and giving them a platform to express themselves.'*⁹⁵



Flux: Fest workshop led by Charlotte Chapman, taken by Tiff Cryer



Flux: Fest Auditorium, taken by Tiff Cryer

95 Senior Residential Worker via email correspondence with Living Words, Dec 2022

"It was amazing to take part in a project based in my community."

"I now know how to express myself creatively."

"I was apprehensive at first because I hadn't done anything like this before, but the confidence I gained from contributing and listening to other people's words has really stuck with me."

"This is the best thing I have ever done."

"I see myself differently now."

"they made more of a connection with their characters as we explored more about their environments & "dreams."

"It helped me see myself in a better light, have self-acceptance, I am happier now."

"I feel really proud of myself for taking part."

"I don't really do music. I was quite surprised when I got the opportunity to do it."

"It's slightly therapeutic, it's a way of getting away from bad stuff that people my age do."

"It helps people to live with what they are going through."

"Everytime there's not one person without a smile on their face."

"The project allowed me to be more empathetic towards myself."

Welcome to Flux:Fest!

1pm - 2pm: Workshops & Activities

Choose what we want to do - follow the arrows!

Workshops (15 mins) to give us all a chance to experience how the Flux projects began...

Da Base Music: Nathaniel Forthergill

* The Clearing

Unlock your creative potential by learning a bit about what goes into music making.

Gulbenkian drama: Emma Willatts

* Auditorium

Have some fun while getting to know other people.

Community Art Kent: Charlotte Chapman

* Meeting Room 1

Explore using Indian ink to create posters.

Beats by Girlz: Florence Glen

* Meeting Room 2

Create music and songwriting with minimal equipment or cost, for women and gender-expansive folk.

Activities

Write on the Walls

* The Clearing

Grab a pen and add to the words on the walls about how you are feeling right now - no holds barred!

Who, me?

* Foyer

Strike a pose and get your photo taken - on your own, or with new or old friends. Then collect your photos to take home at the end of the event.

2pm - 4pm: Food, Films, Words & Music • Auditorium

Hosted by Josie Carter and Samuel Mansell.

2pm: Take your seat at one of the Flux:Fest cabaret tables, or raked seating area.

2.15pm: Food is served! Stay seated - Mexican veggie chilli, chips, and dips for all.

2.30pm: Sharing of some of the Flux projects, including:

- Da Base: Victory Academy - music videos
- Living Words: Living Warriors - film
- Gulbenkian: KRAN - sound piece
- Dante or Die: Will Adams Academy - distanced drama experiences
- Manuel Vason, Michaela Cisarikova & Randolph Matthews: Shepway Youth Hub - music video
- Spark Film: Flux projects - film
- Beats by Girlz: Molly - music
- Living Words: Living Warriors - book launch
- Schools collab: Turner Free School, Year 9 - sound piece
- BBC Ideas: Film featuring Flux project members
- Plus, DJ 2LA plays songs chosen by Flux project members and spoken word from the groups + some surprises thrown in there too!

4.15pm - 5.00pm: Post Flux: Fest

Quarterhouse Auditorium
Living Words invite practitioners, sponsors and funders to discuss Flux: arts & mental health best practice, and next steps.

"Before I did this project, I wasn't really as confident at speaking up about stuff, I've shown it in a different way now. Doing this project has made me more confident to speak up when something is wrong."

"I thought I would feel silly but it was great just to be able to have fun & joke about with the others."

"Was so much fun! I would love to do it again."

"It felt very rebellious, just writing on the walls. It felt very revealing writing everything down, just letting everything out."

"It's just a zine" - we know it's not."

"Feels really good to make something. Seeing my comic strip makes me feel proud...like, how the hell did I draw that?!"

"I have tried something that I never thought I would do. I was nervous to begin with but then I really enjoyed it."

"I never saw myself as someone that had things of value to say and being heard in a forum and getting responses from others about my words was invaluable to me."

"We were with a group of people we wouldn't usually speak to and it was very bonding."

"how supportive they were of each other, that they weren't alone in how they felt and that love & kindness were important."

If you've been part of a Flux project, make sure to take your Flux goody bag!

NAVIGATING YOU IN TIMES OF CHANGE

workshops!

food!

words!

flux

What is Flux?

Flux is a Kent wide, year long arts project, aiming to give different groups of 14-25 year olds the tools to express themselves in new ways, and explore their mental health. From one-day writing and zine workshops in schools, to six-week-long drama, music-making, and self-expression projects at youth clubs, libraries, and community centres - everyone involved has worked with professional artists. Flux has been supported by an advisory board, social care, public health, and mental health sign posters have been in each project strand. Some people involved have gained nationally recognised Arts Award qualifications, too. These awards ask you to get creative in whatever you're interested in, whatever your starting point.

"Flux has deliberately worked with young people and groups who are too often ignored and excluded, and has challenged thinking about the impact the arts can have, and what the young people themselves can achieve."

Tim Woodhouse, Kent & Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme

"Flux has been an incredible partnership programme across East Kent and Medway. Living Words have led the programme with sensitivity, good humour and integrity."

Beatrice Prosser-Snellings, Artswork

Gulbenkian have been working with Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN) and Spring Lane Neighbourhood Centre; Ideas Test with Da Base Music and Dante or Die, at Victory Academy and Will Adams Academy; Community Art Kent with Pie Factory Music and Dover SmART; Beats by Girlz with Flo; Living Words with Kent Libraries and young LGBTQIA+ individuals; collaborations between Living Words artists and Flux practitioners at Turner Free School and Dover Christ Church Academy. Starting in December, we're delighted to include Michaela Cisarikova, Manuel Vason, and Randolph Matthews with Shepway Youth Hub.

Flux is led by Living Words - livingwords.org.uk
flux-kent.com / flux@livingwords.org.uk / @fluxkent



Living Words Arts Charity reg: 115790 GF05, Glassworks, Mill Bay, Folkestone CT20 1JG

Flux:Fest
1-4 pm, Dec 4th 2022
Folkestone Quarterhouse
Mill Bay, Folkestone, CT201BN

flux-kent.com
flux@livingwords.org.uk
@fluxkent

films!

songs!

Flux: Fest programme designed by Lin Frank



'Overcoming self-harm' by Living Words for BBC Ideas



Films were made about the Flux project and were screened at Flux: Fest and are currently available on the Living Words YouTube channel. Among them was the 'Overcoming Self-Harm' film, made for the BBC Ideas website.⁹⁶

Living Warriors project members were invited to be involved. Some were filmed sharing their stories and words written in Living Warriors sessions, some lent their voices to read other people's stories for them. The film has so far been viewed on BCC Ideas 37700 times⁹⁷ and is also available on YouTube. Through this film, Susanna from Living Words has been invited to talk on a Swiss radio channel.



Flux: Fest photobooth by Igor Emmerich (igoremmerich.com)



Flux: Fest signage designed by Lin Frank

96 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/how-i-overcame-self-harm/p0dp35w0>
 97 As of 6th March 2023

Arts Award

Arts Award	
Explore obtained	4
Discover obtained	171
Bronze obtained	11
	186

* As of the publication date of this evaluation, we are awaiting the final moderation for some Arts Awards from Trinity. 14 Arts Awards may change to Explore/Bronze between the evaluation publication date and the end of April 2023. Living Words will update the digital evaluation to reflect this.

* Due to the timing of these late submissions and the timing of evaluation, we haven't been able to include in the evaluation the recommendations from our facilitators on the extra support in filling out the Arts Award literature for certain groups of overlooked young people.

Arts Award was a compulsory element of Flux stipulated by the Arts Council England funding criteria. During Flux 186 young people achieved Arts Awards and 4 people have been trained as Arts Award Advisers. For some young people, Arts Award is a significant achievement. Some, such as students at PRUs, may not gain many qualifications. The teacher at Will Adams PRU⁹⁸ said they'd previously tried Arts Award with students but it wasn't successful as pupils '*rejected worksheets and booklets*'. However, during Flux, they linked in with project tasks and pupils '*happily*' evaluated as they went along and achieved their Bronze Awards, which '*for some of them, it's their only certificate*.' She explained how year 11 pupils are writing up their CVs and talking about how they've '*worked creatively with outside people*' and '*worked well together as a team*.' Achieving the Arts Award is also '*getting them to think about who they are as people moving forward post kind of GCSE... quite often they feel like they haven't got anything to say on a CV. [They think] "I'm gonna fail this year, I'm not doing well"*'. They now see they've achieved something and can talk about what they've learned. One practitioner explained that '*Everybody has done enough to get the award and I think that's immensely powerful*' but Arts Award could '*take them into a different headspace of feeling like "is what I'm doing good enough, I'm being assessed" and in fact, that could be a danger*.'⁹⁹ One of the project managers suggested that the '*Arts Award doesn't always add value to those young people's experiences, particularly in the context of the overall aim around trying to improve wellbeing and mental health outcomes. It feels more like school, it makes it feel more like homework. It makes it feel less free and exploratory because whatever you're doing has to be kind of scaffolded to an art school framework*.'¹⁰⁰ Therefore in projects that are aimed at mental health and wellbeing, it is crucial that the needs of the young people and the circumstances of each setting are taken into consideration when running the Arts Award.

98 Teacher, Will Adams PRU, interview 10.1.23

99 Living Warriors practitioner, interview 8.11.22

100 Bryony Farrant-Davis Ideas Test project manager, interview 27.10.22

Through Flux, four new Arts Award Advisers have been trained. One person works in young people’s services and wanted to do more work in the arts within their role. Flux supported them throughout the training and they are now going to run Arts Award at Shepway Youth Hub. A KRAN Youth Ambassador who is under 25 played a key role in the Gulbenkian sessions. This allowed him to see how Arts can be used with the young people he supports. The training also enhanced his own professional development. This is especially positive as the Flux project couldn’t achieve Arts Awards during the Flux timeframe, but embedding Arts Awards in wider KRAN activity will now enable young refugees to gain qualifications and art experience.



‘Working with this group of young people was definitely one of my highlights in 2022. To be able to watch them grow individually and as a group, in such a short space of time as a result of our project, is truly humbling and reinforces me to keep creating new opportunities for all young people. To top it off, all their work went towards their [Arts Awards] which means they’ll gain a Level 1 Award in the creative arts, opening even more doors and opportunities for them.’

DABASEMUSIC INSTAGRAM POST 9.1.23

Signposting to Social & Health Services

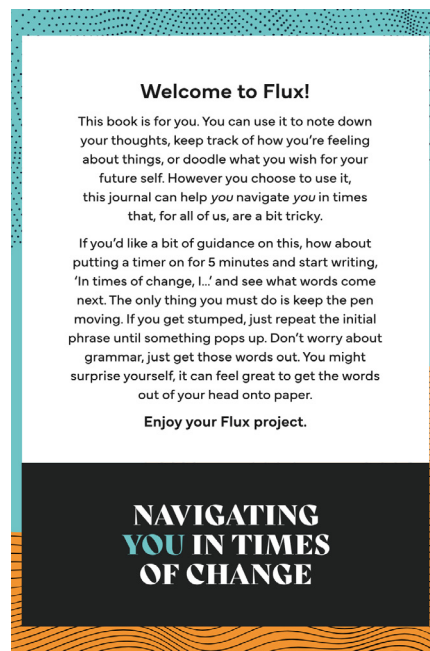
NHS Kent and Medway want to raise awareness of services, and particularly to manage the particular needs of young adults, as distinct from the general adult population, by improving communications, including via social media. Flux ensured that all project members had guidance on where to go to get further support. Zena Watson¹⁰¹ explained it is important to send young people only accessible and relevant information, as too much information can be overwhelming. Flux carefully designed succinct and easy-to-read literature. Each project member received a Flux branded tote bag with a notebook, pen, and NHS Kent & Medway's information booklet which contains comprehensive information about available services. The notebook's inside cover also had signposting information. Sharing about Flux on social media also aided in signposting services to the wider public.

In most projects, signposters supported young people with mental health and wellbeing during sessions and signposting to external services where needed, ensuring *'that they know how their voice can be heard, who to speak to and who to go to in case of any difficulties.'*¹⁰² This allowed practitioners to focus on session delivery. A project member at KRAN greatly benefited from having someone focused on their wellbeing in the session. *'She has been consistent in her attendance recently but it has taken us many months of nurturing to get her to this point... She refused to come unless our mental health advocate was there well, and quite often she would need some time with her. She's now at the point where she is making decisions for the group, stays even when she is worried and quite happily plays all of the silly games even when she's the only girl in the group. Her confidence, self-esteem and ability to communicate have all improved hugely!'*¹⁰³

101 Zena Watson Project Manager: Children's Mental Health Commissioning, interview 1.12.22 and email 2.12.22

102 Mental Health Signposter, Gulbenkian KRAN Sessions, interview 1.12.22

103 Emma Willatts - Creative Engagement Practitioner, Gulbenkian, Case Study form 1.2.23



Flux notebook sticker designed by Studio Oiseau

Signposters were usually people with some experience with mental health: professionally, through education, or through lived experience. One signposter was previously a health commissioner in Kent, another signposter was a student psychotherapist, and another was a young people's project worker at Mind, so this project was a really useful experience for them. A project member became a signposter for a later group and was employed to do design work for Flux, subsequently working with Living Words on all their design output. They are now a member of the Living Words team. One less experienced signposter got support from one of the mental health advisors to ensure they better understood the boundaries and aims of the role. Not all projects had a signposter. Community Art Kent's project at Dover Smart has existing support available and the room was too small for additional people. Ideas Test had issues recruiting signposters, with one signposter leaving and another candidate unable to commence the role due to school protocols and DBS application timing issues. The signposter who worked with young refugees at KRAN was concerned that there may be barriers to accessing the signposted mental health services due to the complex needs and situations of young refugees.¹⁰⁴ Also, having translated signposting booklets would have been beneficial. Providing support within the Flux project through arts activity and through conversations with signposters, project managers and peers has benefitted young people who get a 'more positive experience earlier on.'¹⁰⁵

Flux was not able to track who was signposted or referred to services due to confidentiality but the signposter role was valued by all who gave feedback. A practitioner gave an example of how signposting worked in practice. In the process of sending out session reminders, one project member said they were having a really hard week. The practitioner offered to direct them to the Flux signposter but *'I think particularly for that person, their initial reaction to the idea of signposting was - I don't want to be given the same links that I've been given over and over again.'* However, the young person went on to talk with the signposter who offered them support and gave them links to helpful services. The facilitator explained, *'I think often people just get sent some first step linking numbers and information and often I think that can be sometimes off-putting because if you've been in the system before, or if you've been given those things before, sometimes people have negative experiences or have felt frustrated by the process. So I think actual support in accessing those is often the very same thing, but just reframing them a bit and having somebody guide you through it. I think it's incredibly valuable.'*¹⁰⁶

104 Mental Health Signposter, Gulbenkian KRAN Sessions, interview 1.12.22

105 End of project stakeholder meeting after Flux: Fest 4.12.22

106 Living Warriors practitioner interview 8.11.22

Partnerships & Cross-Sector Working in Arts & Health

Flux included a wide network of cross-sector partners in Kent and Medway who worked together to explore how arts can benefit the mental health and wellbeing of marginalised young people in the region.¹⁰⁷ Speakers at the NHS Kent and Medway conference¹⁰⁸ suggested that local authority and NHS services aren't reaching all marginalised groups, especially those impacted by intersectionality. Local arts organisations are often well connected with marginalised groups in local communities, and the arts come without stigmas that may be attached to formal mental health or wellbeing provision.¹⁰⁹

Project members were mostly found by the arts partners rather than connections made by KCC or NHS Kent and Medway. In most cases, partners used established links as post-funding timeframes and resources were too tight to establish new relationships with groups and agencies.¹¹⁰ Recruiting young people post-pandemic in some settings was challenging. Young people have changed their habits and some are still nervous about group settings.¹¹¹ People accessing groups such as Pie Factory and Dover Smart haven't returned to previous numbers. Recruiting participants for Living Warriors was different to schools or established groups as it required reaching members of the public through word of mouth, invitations, posters and flyers. Through an interactive process with young people, Living Words actioned changes to marketing materials to be more appealing to young people.¹¹²

Pre-existing relationships between individuals aided the quick setup of projects. However, there is a risk that if someone moves on from a role, such as a teacher changing schools, those connections get quickly lost and new relationships need to be built from scratch.¹¹³ So considering networking opportunities across sectors and building in time for developing new partnerships would be advantageous for future project planning.

The Flux timeframe didn't match the academic year. The project at Victory Academy starting towards the second half of the summer term, *'which is the worst time to start up in a secondary school'*¹¹⁴ and it *'needs a few months to have those conversations and build those relationships...and you've got to go by the academic year.'* Living Warrior autumn sessions were postponed to avoid starting at the same time as young people started at college¹¹⁵ In schools, curriculums are planned a

107 See appendix for full list of stakeholders.

108 Kent and Medway Children and Young People Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Network Conference, Oct 22

109 Sussex University interim evaluation meeting 20.10.22/ interviews with Tim Woodhouse, 14.11.22 and Zena Watson, 1.12.22

110 Steering group highlight report form

111 Interview with Susanna Howard, 10.1.23

112 Sussex University interim evaluation meeting feedback 20.10.22

113 Interviews with Beatrice Prosser-Snellings and project managers.

114 Bryony Farrant-Davis Ideas Test project manager, interview 26.10.22

115 Steering group highlight report form.

year in advance, classes are spread out over the week and taking Years 10 & 11 off-time-table is problematic. Working with only one class excludes others but offering the project to a whole year group is too large, so selecting which pupils to involve was difficult for the Schools Workshops.¹¹⁶ Turner Schools Community Manager said that they really enjoyed being involved and that they encourage work that brings external practitioners in to work with their pupils 'because they have different skill sets [and Flux practitioners] had a really good understanding of young people and they pitched the workshops at the right level and that was accessible but moved at the right pace as well. We were particularly impressed with that', which wasn't always the case with external practitioners.¹¹⁷

Not all projects were fully completed. Margate Quarterdeck project had to be cancelled part way in as it was felt there was a lack of support onsite for the practitioner, compounded by under-communication between staff at Quarterdeck. So to safeguard the practitioner, Flux withdrew from the project at Quarterdeck. Marlowe Theatre had to pull out due to staff changes which impacted the budget and management of Flux. In place of these activities, Living Words commissioned Beats by Girlz to work with a young person who lives in a care setting, which ran until Christmas. Further sessions were planned but weren't possible as the practitioner could not run some early January sessions. Then the keyworker informed Flux that the young person had some ongoing personal issues that meant they couldn't continue. Therefore Flux: Fest was the culmination of that project where the music they produced was played at the event. However, Living Words will keep in touch with the young person and offer more opportunities when the time is right. It was crucial for Flux to be flexible and understanding of some of the unique and complex situations of the young people involved in the Flux project.

*'Good communications between different services and mutual respect and understanding must help in offering good quality services. Good communications and an appreciation of each other's cultures are therefore key to success.'*¹¹⁸ Partners met regularly to discuss the project and record progress, issues and achievements, ad-



Poster from Living Warriors:
Flux campaign

116 Katy Tibbles, Senior Stakeholder and Community Engagement Manager, Turner Schools, interview 5.1.23

117 Katy Tibbles interview 5.1.23

118 Cutler, D. Creatively Minded An initial mapping study of participatory arts and mental health activity in the UK. February 2020

ditionally filling in highlight report forms online that formed the basis of Advisory Board meetings. Monthly advisory board meetings, with occasional special meetings - organised and led by Living Words - discussed progress, targets, issues and risks across each project. During the first six months, Flux was impacted by the covid pandemic with meetings postponed or ongoing covid related issues reducing attendance. Ideas Test attended various Medway network meetings including the Self-Harm Prevention Network, through which they were able to support young people at risk of gang involvement and were given advice and support (see Case Study 1). This *'joined-up approach'* was very helpful with signposting and cross-sector working.¹¹⁹ Wider sharing of best practice included presenting at conferences¹²⁰ and at Kent Community Foundation and South Kent Mind networking events. Cross-sector organisations were invited to the final sharing event, Flux: Fest. Other professional development opportunities were available for stakeholders including Arts Award training of four people and a CPD session after Flux: Fest.

'Flux has been an incredible partnership programme across East Kent and Medway. Living Words have led the programme with sensitivity, good humour and integrity. The young people taking part in the programme have clearly benefitted from the support that Flux has provided, becoming more confident, engaging in peer-to-peer support and producing remarkable creative outputs.'¹²¹

BEATRICE PROSSER-SNELLING, ARTSWORK REPRESENTATIVE

Living Words was the anchor organisation that efficiently led Flux. However, their staff had heavy workloads and there was limited time and budget to deal with the complex nature of Flux: working with marginalised groups across multiple unique projects, finding new partners and establishing new projects part way in the project. Flux project management took more time than anticipated and the budget for this complex project was tight. Having a dedicated paid coordinator was essential to manage the project and help keep the focus on project aims. This role also gave an early career arts organiser valuable project management experience. Budgeting for Living Words to dedicate time to the project management of Flux: Fest took the pressure off other partners so they could focus on their project delivery and reduced decision-making timeframes. All partners worked with project members to co-curate content to showcase at Flux: Fest which many project members attended and performed at.

Flux highlights some of the issues that arts organisations, including Living Words, face by taking on short-term funded projects. Post-pandemic funding situations

119 Bryony Farrant-Davis Ideas Test project manager, interview 7.11.22

120 Including at the Kent and Medway Children and Young People Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Network Conference, Oct 22

121 Beatrice Prosser-Snelling, Artsworld Representative feedback for inclusion in Flux: Fest programme to Living Words, Nov 2022

of many arts organisations have worsened, with Living Words having decreased funding and an uncertain future. Flux was a complex project and the post-funding timeframe was very short for getting the project established. The project managers worked longer hours than is sustainable due to the intense workload of the project. This has left little room for Living Words to focus on future funding. Short-term and project-by-project funding makes legacy planning difficult and continuity isn't guaranteed. Living Words don't know if they will exist in the future.

The Future

Flux successfully explored a range of unique ways to work with different groups of young people and this differentiation was a strength of Flux which should continue when developing work specific to more marginalised groups, communities, schools and organisations. Existing partnerships should also continue. If future funding and support allows, Living Words would like to work with local organisations that work with young people with physical disabilities as there wasn't time to establish those partnerships in this pilot project. Building in time and opportunities for developing these new partnerships will be important in future projects. However, it was highlighted that Flux *'can't work with everyone, it needs deep engagement not be diluted to increase impact.'*¹²² Networking opportunities across health, arts, education and community sectors are needed to maintain contacts across organisations even when there are staff changes. It was suggested that there is a need for wider and regular cross-sector sharing of best practice and needs, as the arts and health sectors are constantly changing and evolving.¹²³

Sharing of Flux's creative outcomes continues, with published books available, films and music on YouTube and the 'Overcoming Self-Harm' film on the BBC Ideas website. The project at Shepway Youth Hub continued after the pilot Flux finished and their project sharing will take place at Normal: Festival of the Brain which will take place in Folkestone later in 2023. This will be another opportunity to showcase the work Flux did and continue to signpost people to mental health and wellbeing support. The training of four new Arts Award Advisers during Flux will allow Arts Award to be embedded in new settings and be delivered to new cohorts of young people.

To run Flux in the future it will be necessary to establish longer-term funding to sustain arts organisations, including Living Words, and allow time and budget for research and project management to ensure the project meets the needs of marginalised young people in Kent and Medway. Through Flux, NHS Kent and Medway have seen how arts can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of

¹²² Sussex University interim evaluation meeting feedback 20.10.22

¹²³ Practitioner & project manager interviews / End of project stakeholder meeting after Flux: Fest 4.12.22

marginalised young people which helps reduce the risk of self-harm and suicide of marginalised young people and Flux supports their aims and objectives:

‘I am really excited about Flux’s potential to give young people a chance to use the creative arts to find out more about themselves and hopefully reduce their risk of self-harm. Flux has deliberately worked with young people and groups who are too often ignored and excluded, and has challenged thinking about the impact the arts can have, and what the young people themselves can achieve. I am honoured to be associated with this programme and will be using the evidence of its impact to try and secure additional funding for more arts-based health projects in the future.’¹²⁴

TIM WOODHOUSE, KENT AND MEDWAY ICS SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME MANAGER

Conclusion

Flux successfully used creative arts interventions to improve the mental health and wellbeing of over 300 children and young people from marginalised groups in Kent and Medway. NHS mental health services can’t reach everyone and mental illness in young people has increased post-pandemic. Utilising existing connections with creative practitioners, schools and groups who work with marginalised young people allowed Flux to start quickly and reach at-risk groups in local communities that research shows are more likely to face inequalities in their ability to access advice, help and risk support.

Flux signposted young people to mental health support which potentially helped lower the risk of self-harm and suicide and improved the wellbeing of project members. The guidance of health experts was crucial to ensure Flux could properly support the needs of the project members. The use of signposters ensured young people’s voices were heard, that they were signposted to local public health services and also allowed practitioners to focus on session delivery. Supervision sessions for practitioners and signposters ensured a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Flux shows how creative arts interventions can deliver mental health outcomes by supporting wellbeing through creative processes. The arts gave young people increased agency to express themselves and have control over what they made and shared. Flux created spaces where they felt safe expressing their feeling and ideas through art. Giving them space to share allowed their voices to be heard both within the project and beyond. Creating well-produced high-quality sharing

¹²⁴ Tim Woodhouse, Kent and Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme Manager, feedback to Living Words via email, Nov 2022

events like Flux: Fest and screening content online celebrated the work created by project members. It showed young people that their thoughts, feelings and creative outputs have value to others, it helped normalise discussions around mental health and wellbeing and created opportunities to share mental health and wellbeing content with wider audiences. Most project members had an opportunity to undertake an Arts Award which improved educational and self-confidence outcomes and the training of four new Arts Award advisors enables this to continue in a number of community-based projects.

Flux has not yet enabled Living Words to strengthen its longer-term strategic leadership. Feedback highlighted issues that the project-by-project funding model has for arts organisations. Flux was a complex project with a large workload, short planning timeframe and tight budget. Living Words did not have time to focus on future funding which makes legacy planning difficult and continuity isn't guaranteed. Post-pandemic, many arts organisations are struggling and some may not be able to continue. Whilst Flux shows how successful creative arts interventions can be for supporting the wellbeing and mental health of marginalised young people, Flux has not yet resulted in a strategic step change that will allow local partnerships to grow and continue Flux.

Appendix A:

Evaluation Aim:

This evaluation tells the story of Flux, illustrates the value it has had to stakeholders and how Flux has helped improve the mental health and wellbeing of project members.

Methodology:

This Flux evaluation was commissioned in September 2022 as a locally focused addition to an evaluation by Sussex University, which is completing the Artsworld Mental Health Partnership evaluation which covers four regional projects in the south of England, with Flux being one of the projects. As this evaluation was commissioned part way through the project most data collection options were limited to those already in place. Flux project managers wanted to limit the evaluation workload for practitioners and project members, so existing evidence collected for the Sussex evaluation or by Living Words was used for this evaluation as much as possible. This was complemented by: Interviews with 14 stakeholders (project managers, practitioners, signposters, funding representatives and cross-sector partners); Attendance at two sharing events: Living Warriors sharing event at Folkestone Library on 3.11.22 and Flux: Fest on 4.12.22; a post-Flux discussion after Flux: Fest with Flux cross-sector stakeholders 4.12.22.

The evaluator was given access to a limited number of 'Distance Travelled Reports' and 'Practitioner Session Reports' which were completed by some practitioners and project members for the Sussex University evaluation. 'Distance Travelled' data was analysed to illustrate individual improvements. General feedback notes provided within the available Practitioner Session reports gave insight into session content and group activities. Living Warriors collected feedback through online forms created by Living Words and some adaptations to the forms for the autumn group to gather further evidence. Raw footage of interviews from some of the films made was also used to gather quotes.

Appendix B:

Evaluation Surveys & Questionnaires

Sussex University Distance Travelled Reports

'Distance Travelled Reports' were given to young people and practitioners by Sussex University for their 'Artswork Mental Health Partnership evaluation.' This evaluation had access to 25 Young Person Reports and 29 Practitioner Reports from Ideas Test at Victory Academy and Gulbenkian at KRAN.

Young Person Rated 'Distance Travelled' Report

Please read each statement and indicate how much you think this changed for YOU SINCE YOU STARTED COMING TO THE SESSIONS.

There are no wrong or right answers. It is okay if there was no change at this time.

Please indicate how much change there was, if any, by putting one answer for how you were AT YOUR FIRST SESSION one answer for NOW on a scale from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (completely true of me). There are ten questions in total.

Please don't forget to give your details at the top of the page!

A practitioner can complete these ratings on your behalf and any questions you don't want to answer please circle the [x].

Thank you!

Date 'first session' refers to:

Date 'Now' refers to:

		Not true of me at all				Completely true of me	Prefer not to answer
1. I am interested in [creative arts]	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
2. I enjoy [creative arts]	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
3. I have a good knowledge of [creative arts]	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
4. [creative arts] helps me express how I feel	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
5. I work well with other people in the session	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
6. I listen to others	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
7. I contribute to the session	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
8. I get on well with practitioners	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
9. I am confident	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
10. I am motivated to do things	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X

Rated 'Distance Travelled' Report

Dear member of staff/ creative arts practitioner,

Below, you'll see different skills that some young people have. Please indicate how much you think these skills changed for each young person SINCE THEY STARTED COMING TO THE FLUX SESSIONS. It is okay if there was no change or if you think their skills improved or reduced, there are no right or wrong answers.

Please indicate how much change there has been, if any, by giving (circling) one answer for HOW THEY WERE AT THEIR FIRST SESSION and one answer for NOW on a scale from 1 (not at all true of the young person) to 5 (completely true of the young person).

Please complete this for each young person involved.

Many thanks

Are there any other skills you would like to reflect on?

		Not true of me at all				Completely true of me	Prefer not to answer
1. Actively engaging with the session activities	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
2. Interested in Music/ creative arts	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
3. Shows good social skills	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
4. Listens to others	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
5. Shows awareness of self	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
6. Sensitive to others	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
7. Shows appropriate behaviour	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
8. Able to work with staff members	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
9. Confident	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X
10. Shows general motivation to do things	At the first session	1	2	3	4	5	X
	Now	1	2	3	4	5	X

Living Warriors Surveys

Living Words distributed end-of-project surveys to project members in the Spring and Summer sessions. In the autumn term, these surveys were adapted for this evaluation to include a project start survey and to add the 'feelings' questions. Feedback from all responses was analysed.

Project Start - Living Warriors: Flux project survey

Thank you for your contribution to this survey. Your answers help the organisations involved in FLUX improve their offer, future planning and fundraising applications. The feedback is anonymous but what you write may be quoted in the evaluation report. Please do not include your name.

If you have any questions please contact the Project Coordinator of the FLUX project you took part in, or email the evaluator.

- 1.** What do you hope to get out of this project (what value do you think it will have for you)?
- 2.** Thinking about the project, please select the emoji (1. 😞 2. 😓 3. 😐 4. 😊 5. 😄)
which best shows how you feel about....
 - » doing this project/session?
 - » trying new things?
 - » coping with challenges or difficulties?
 - » being around other people?
 - » about yourself at this moment?
 - » doing this project/session?
 - » trying new things?
 - » coping with challenges or difficulties?
 - » being around other people?
 - » about yourself at this moment?

Post-Living Warriors: Flux project survey

Thank you for your contribution to this survey. Your answers help the organisations involved in FLUX improve their future planning and support of communities. The feedback is anonymous but what you write may be quoted in the evaluation report. Please do not include your name. If you have any questions please contact the Project Coordinator of the FLUX project you took part in, or email the evaluator.

- 1.** Was the project of value to you? Yes / No / Maybe
- 2.** Please select the emoji (1. 😞 2. 😐 3. 😊 4. 😄 5. 😁) which best shows how you currently feel about..... :
 - » doing this project?
 - » trying new things?
 - » coping with challenges or difficulties?
 - » being around other people?
 - » about yourself at this moment?
 - » doing this project?
 - » trying new things?
 - » coping with challenges or difficulties?
 - » being around other people?
 - » about yourself at this moment?
- 3.** Reflecting on how you felt before you started this project, please select the emoji which best describes how you felt about... :
 - » doing this project?
 - » trying new things?
 - » coping with challenges or difficulties?
 - » being around other people?
 - » about yourself before the project started?
 - » doing this project?
 - » trying new things?
 - » coping with challenges or difficulties?
 - » being around other people?
 - » about yourself before the project started?
- 4.** Did you feel heard by the Living Words artist you worked with?
Yes / No / Maybe
- 5.** Did the project help you see yourself differently? Yes / No / Maybe
 - » If you answered 'Yes' to the above - can you tell us, in what way?
- 6.** Would you recommend the project to others? Yes / No / Maybe

7. What was the most surprising thing about the project?
8. What are five words that come to you to describe how your book makes you feel?
9. What would have improved your experience?
10. I feel my book can be a tool to help me be kinder to myself.
5 = strongly agree. 1 = strongly disagree.
11. Any other comments about the value of this project for you?

FLUX: FEST Feedback Postcard

At Flux:Fest, Living Words designed a feedback postcard which asked the following:

Did attending FluxFest today make you feel...

A - worse than before I arrived / **B** - the same as before I arrived / **C** - better than before I arrived

How much do you agree with the statement ' This event has valued the voices of young people ' Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

Favourite part of today?

One word to describe how I feel right now

Other comments:

Appendix C: List of Stakeholders

Core Partner Arts Organisations

Living Words, Ideas Test, Gulbenkian, Community Art Kent.

Project Leads:

Living Words: Susanna Howard, Olivia Franklin (Flux Project Leads)

Flux: Living Words: ilā Kamalagharan

Ideas Test: Bryony Farrant-Davis

Gulbenkian: Emma Willatts and Rebecca Lees

Community Art Kent: Charlotte Chapman

Artists, Facilitators & Additional Partners

Nathaniel Fothergill (Flux: Ideas Test project lead/Founder of Da Base Music)

Laura Harris (Flux: Ideas Test project practitioner)

Dante or Die Theatre Company: James and Marie (Flux: Ideas Test project leads/Dante or Die Practitioners)

Randolph Matthews (Shepway Youth Hub practitioner/Musician)

Manuel Vason (Shepway Youth Hub practitioner/Photographer)

Michaela Cisarikova (Shepway Youth Hub practitioner/Dancer)

Beats by Girlz: Florence Glen (Flux: Beats by Girlz project lead/Musician)

Folkestone Library (venue): Anna Hendy, Lynsey Ilett (Library representatives)

Marlowe Theatre (initial partner): s: Jack Finch-Harding, Lucy Curtis (Project leads)

Graysen Whittaker (BeYou employee/Mental Health signposter for Flux: Living Warriors)

Lauretta Kavanagh (Advisory Board rep/Mental Health signposter for Flux: Living Warriors)

Lin Frank (Mental Health signposter for Flux: Living Warriors/Representative for Living Warriors on creative outputs/Graphic Designer for Flux)

Siobhán McGrath (Living Words Team Member/Flux: Fest coordinator)

Osama Sharkia (Youth Ambassador at KRAN/Flux: Gulbenkian KRAN sessions practitioner)

Agata Paradowska (Mental Health signposter for Flux: Gulbenkian KRAN)

Zo Defferary (Freelance arts practitioner/Quarterdeck sessions practitioner)

Shazea Quraishi (Living Words artist/Project lead for Flux: Living Warriors)

Oliver Senton (Living Words artist/Project lead for Flux: Living Warriors)

Zoe Aldrich (Living Words artist/Project lead for Flux: Living Warriors)

Josh Cottingham (Mental Health signposter for Flux: Living Warriors)

Maria Panteli (Early-help worker/representative at Shepway Youth Hub)

Andre Bragga-Verissimo (Sound artist/Flux: schools practitioner)

Katy Tibbles (Senior Stakeholder and Community Engagement Manager for Turner Free Schools)

Danni Parris (Head of Art at Dover Christ Church Academy)

Niamh Williams (Young people's project worker at East Kent Mind/Mental Health signposter for Flux: Community Art Kent)

Callum (Actor/comic/project facilitator for Flux: Gulbenkian at Spring Lane Neighbourhood Centre)

Monika Oravcova (Community Liaison Officer at Victory Academy)

Artists, Facilitators & Additional Partners (cont.)

Tammy Rodden (Art & Design lead at Will Adams Academy)

Josephine Carter and Samuel Mansell (Flux:Fest hosts)

Fiona Dungay - Studio Oiseau (Creator/Designer of Flux branding)

Julia Miranda - www.juliamiranda.uk (Visual minutes artist for Flux: Fest)

Igor Emmerich - igoremmerich.com (Flux: Fest Photographer)

Creative Folkestone/Folkestone Quarterhouse team (venue hired for Flux: Fest)

Michael Bassett (Flux social media coordinator)

Schools & Community Groups

Victory Academy, Chatham

Will Adams Pupil Referral Unit, Gillingham

Shepway Youth Hub, Folkestone

Spring Lane Neighbourhood Centre, Canterbury

Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN), Canterbury

Pie Factory Music, Ramsgate

Dover SmART Project, Dover

Quarterdeck Youth Hub, Margate

Dover Christ Church Academy, Dover

Turner Free School, Folkestone

Health & Local Authority Partners

Kent County Council, Medway Council

Kent and Medway NHS Trust

Kent and Medway Self Harm and Suicide Prevention Team

Advisory Board & Support Partners

Lauretta Kavanagh (Lead advisor for Flux/Advisory Board/Mental Health Strategy and Delivery Consultant)

Beatrice Prosser-Snelling (Lead advisor for Flux/Advisory Board/Artswork representative/Kent Partnership Investment Consultant)

Tim Woodhouse (Lead advisory and funder for Flux/Advisory Board/Kent & Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme Manager at KCC Public Health)

Lucy Keeley (Lead advisor for Flux/Advisory Board/Principal Project Officer in the Culture and Creative Economy Service at KCC)

Hollie Brennan (Support partner for Flux/Project Support Officer at Kent & Medway Suicide Prevention Programme at KCC Public Health)

Alice Wode (Advisory Board/Lived Experience as a young person going through Mental Health systems, as well as studying in the area)

Zena Watson (Support partner for Flux/Project Manager for Children's Mental Health Commissioning at NHS Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board)

Appendix D: List of Creative Outputs

Creative outputs co-produced with young people

BBC film

Shared via BBC Ideas website/Living Words YouTube, through campaigns throughout the year & through the public health advisory group. Will be shared for the Mental Health Awareness campaign led by the BBC later this year.

Links: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/how-i-overcame-self-harm/p0dp35w0>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glnr6o9lqds&list=PL1vi-_HRecqFXrjVFQVSRU8VnIrXlikXa

Living Warriors Spoken Word/Song

Available to listen to on Bandcamp, and to buy the cassette.

Link: <https://livingwarriors.bandcamp.com/releases>

Turner Free school sound-piece

Shown at Flux: Fest

Drill music piece (co-created with the young person and Florence Glen under Beats by Girlz)

Part was shared at Flux: Fest.

Living Warriors film

Screened at The Roundhouse (Sept 22), Children and Young People's Conference led by Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Innovation Partnership (Oct 22), Our Screen Heritage (online), South Kent Mind Networking Event (Dec 22).

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61NJey26He0&t=6s>

Ideas Test music video

Shown at Flux: Fest and available on YouTube (unpublished).

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhwDAFeHgGY>

Shepway Youth Hub dance by Shepway Youth Hub member

Performed at Flux: Fest.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5MxvwnEjY8&t=10s>

Reflections/work, Turner Free School

Shown in Folkestone Town Hall window to spread the message to young people/public to look after their mental health throughout the summer holidays.

Link: <https://www.instagram.com/p/ChrcRxxsWik/?hl=en>

Lin Frank

Living Warriors project member who went on to become a graphic designer for Flux - for posters/signage/book editing & creating/invitations/illustrations - displayed physically and digitally throughout 2022, and at Flux: Fest. Lin is now a fully-fledged member of the Living Words team, working on graphic-design-based projects for the team.

Zines produced by project members at Dover Smart, Pie Factory and Quarterdeck

Zines could be sold by young people and were given to peers across all groups. Available upon request.

Living Warriors books

Each individual received a book of their own words, which they could share with whoever they wish. One anthology was also produced for each group (3) and a 4th which brought together words from all cohorts, titled Living Warriors: Flux (available to buy and launched at Flux: Fest)

Link: <https://www.livingwarriorsfilms.com/store/p/living-warriors-flux>

Creative outputs co-produced with young people (cont.)

Will Adams Podcasts & Collages

Shared across the school (not able to be aired due to copyright). Pupils also produced individual collages.

Flux Official Film

Screened at Flux: Fest and available on YouTube. Many project members spoke on camera (some for the first time) about their project experiences/what relevance Flux has had on their own lives/how it has supported them.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdnRYqEEEn70&t=1s>

Flux Social Media (Instagram)

Young People expressed their views and outputs/reflections/feedback was documented to represent each project.

Link: <https://www.instagram.com/flux.kent/?hl=en>

Flux TikTok

Another social media outlet where reels were shared. Link: <https://www.tiktok.com/@flux.kent>

Flux: Fest Auditorium film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5MxvwnEjY8&t=2s>

CPD sessions and External Events

Flux project members spoke/shared their experiences at various events (see below)

Living Warriors Sharing Events at Folkestone Library

Internal group sharings: Apr 22, Aug 22, Nov 22

Public large-scale sharing event: July 22

Folkestone Pride

Living Warriors: Flux sharing at Folkestone Pride, July 22

Flux: Fest

A final sharing event for all projects at Quarterhouse, Folkestone, December 22

Flux was a year-long project featuring a collective of cultural organisations across Kent and Medway which implemented cross-sector working with the social care and public health sectors. Through the use of creativity and the arts, Flux explored ways of improving the mental health and wellbeing of marginalised children and young people (aged 14-25) who are at risk of self-harm, worsening mental ill health or suicide across Kent and Medway.



Flux is led by Living Words - livingwords.org.uk
flux-kent.com / flux@livingwords.org.uk / [@flux.kent](https://twitter.com/flux.kent)

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