

# The Baring Foundation

## CREATIVELY MINDED AND YOUNG

A selection of arts and mental health projects with,  
by and for children and young people

*Compiled by Harriet Lowe*



# **Creatively minded and young: a selection of arts and mental health projects with, by and for children and young people**

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## **About the Baring Foundation**

We are an independent foundation which protects and advances human rights and promotes inclusion. We believe in the role of a strong, independent civil society nationally and internationally. We use our resources to enable civil society to work with people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage and to act strategically to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality.

One of our three grant programme covers the arts in the UK. From 2020, the Foundation is focusing its arts funding on activity with people with mental health problems. The programme started with a mapping study of arts and mental health activity in the UK called *Creatively Minded* and launched its first funding round in July 2020.

This second report of the programme – *Creatively Minded and Young* – was compiled by the Baring Foundation's Communications & Research Officer, Harriet Lowe.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Foundation would like to thank all of those who contributed case studies to this report and kindly answered our questions.

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# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Case studies A-Z</b>	<b>7</b>
42nd Street	
64 Million Artists	
Avant Cymru	
City of London Sinfonia	
Conwy Arts Trust at Venue Cymru	
Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity	
East London Dance	
Fluid Motion Theatre Company	
Fresh Minds Education	
Hampshire Cultural Trust	
Kazzum Arts	
Kids in Control	
Noise Solution	
Place2Be	
Quench Arts	
Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival	
Soft Touch Arts	
<b>Creatively minded, young and around the world</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Some reflections</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Index of case studies by art form and by country</b>	<b>63</b>

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# Introduction

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## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Early in 2020, the Baring Foundation published *Creatively Minded: An initial participatory mapping of arts & mental health activity*. That research, carried out by the Foundation's Director David Cutler during 2019, identified over 170 organisations working in the field of arts and mental health, although this is certainly an underestimate.

Of these we identified around 20 organisations or projects working with children and/or young people UK-wide. This is probably also an underestimate but our impression is that there are relatively few organisations in this field.

This new collection of case studies – *Creatively Minded and Young* – aims to showcase the work of some of those organisations we identified and a few we have come across since. We hope by sharing these we will not only spread some inspiring ideas and good practice, but also start a conversation about how arts can be used more to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

## DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

### Age

We have included work which supports young people up to and over the age of 18 where a programme continues past a young person's 18th birthday. The importance of continuity for young people when they might be making an often difficult transition from CAMHS into adult mental health services is a point worth noting.

### Geography

We include examples from all four nations of the UK and have included a few examples from other countries as well (see page 55).

### Arts

The Foundation is primarily interested in participatory arts rather than creative arts therapies, though we recognise in this area there is some overlap. In terms of what 'the arts' consist of, we have always funded a broad range of art forms, including what is sometimes called 'popular culture', and we hope to fund as broad a range in the field of Arts & Mental Health as well.

## LIMITATIONS

Organisations included this were identified through desk research or word of mouth. It is certainly not comprehensive. It is also not an analysis of the sector, but we have instead sought to let organisations speak for themselves. However, we identified a number of common themes, challenges and aspirations for the future which we collate in the final section (page 57).

Like *Creatively Minded* which provided a broad overview of the Arts & Mental Health field in the UK as a whole, this report will also help shape the funding strategy of the Foundation.

Finally, this is not the end! We are continuing to get to know the sector and develop our understanding of it. If you work with children and young people (or adults) in this area and would like to tell us more about your work, please do get in touch.



My name is Liz and I began Wavelength in late 2016.

At the time, I was medically signed off school  
and I was having a mental health breakdown.

I found Wavelength at a therapy clinic,  
where there was a card with the information on it.

Attending Wavelength reminded me of my love for music  
while in a dark time. It gave me the creative outlet of songwriting  
and music making that I didn't know I could do.

Music for me is a therapy; I struggle to voice, express  
and even feel my own feelings and music allows me to access  
that part of myself and express it in the best way I can.

I never knew I had this ability before Wavelength.

Being on the project improved my confidence  
in numerous ways; in my musical ability,  
in my people skills and in myself.

It was a slow process and I'm still attempting  
to improve my confidence even more, yet I believe  
Wavelength was the outlet I needed to kick-start the process.

I have recently progressed from a participant  
to a peer mentor in the project.

**LIZ, WAVELENGTH, QUENCH ARTS.**



# Context

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

### How many children and young people?

A major survey by the NHS in England in 2018, the first in many years, found that 1 in 8 children and young people (aged 5-19) have a mental health disorder (either emotional, behavioural, hyperactive, or other) at any one time. Around 1 in 12 reported an emotional disorder such as anxiety or depression.<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, 10% of 5- to 16-year-olds are estimated to have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem<sup>2</sup> and in Wales the figure cited is that 1 in 10<sup>3</sup> young people have a mental health problem. Less data is available on children and young people's mental health in Northern Ireland. However, it is thought that the rate is at least similar if not higher, given that prevalence among adults is about 25% higher than elsewhere in the UK.<sup>4</sup>

Across the board, there is a consensus that there has been an increase in the prevalence of mental health problems among children and young people over the last 15 to 20 years. Onset tends to happen during teenage years (half by age 14<sup>5</sup>), but there is evidence of problems increasingly emerging at a much younger age.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to those young people in touch with mental health services, there are many more who may not be seeking help or coping with support from family or school.<sup>7</sup>

### Drivers of poor mental health among children and young people: a brief outline

Some factors in children's lives make having a mental health problem more likely. Experience of abuse is a significant risk factor. Others include family poverty and having a parent with poor mental health. Young people at higher risk include those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other,<sup>8</sup> young refugees and asylum-seeking children, looked-after children and young offenders/young people at risk of offending.<sup>9</sup>

Some aspects of modern society have also been implicated in the decline in children's wellbeing which 64 Million Artists expressed eloquently to us:

*“The issues facing children and young people are complex and huge in 2020. They are experiencing intense pressures from multiple directions, as well as a vast amount of existential uncertainty.”*

<sup>1</sup> Mental Health Foundation, *What new statistics show about children's mental health*, [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/what-new-statistics-show-about-childrens-mental-health](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/what-new-statistics-show-about-childrens-mental-health).

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Children's Services Coalition, [www.thescsc.org.uk/campaigns/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs](http://www.thescsc.org.uk/campaigns/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs).

<sup>3</sup> *Mind over Matter*, Children, Young People and Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, 2018, [senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf](http://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Youth mental health in Northern Ireland, Access Evidence No. 3 March 2018, Centre for Effective Services, [www.effectiveservices.org/assets/Youth\\_Mental\\_Health\\_28.03.18.pdf](http://www.effectiveservices.org/assets/Youth_Mental_Health_28.03.18.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> *Mind over Matter*, Children, Young People and Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, 2018, [senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf](http://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> The number of children estimated to need some kind of mental health support but not specialist care is 1.2 million. See *The State of Children's Mental Health Services*, January 2020: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services).

<sup>8</sup> Mental Health Foundation, *What new statistics show about children's mental health*, [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/what-new-statistics-show-about-childrens-mental-health](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/what-new-statistics-show-about-childrens-mental-health).

<sup>9</sup> Mental Health Foundation, *State of a generation: preventing mental health problems in children and young people*, 2019.

*Their sense of a future and what is imaginable, is being circumscribed by climate emergency, a global pandemic, and economic fragility. They are also experiencing a public infrastructure in which trust in institutions has been hollowed out by globalisation. Young people are being asked to forge their own meaning and purpose in life in the absence of dependable external structures. ”*

**64 Million Artists (see page 11).**

To this we can add social media,<sup>10</sup> although evidence suggests that it has both positive and negative impacts on wellbeing.

This report was compiled during the COVID-19 lockdown in Spring/Summer 2020 and although we do not yet know its effects on the mental health of young people, or on the wider population, we can speculate that this will often be negative and amplify existing problems. Many contributors referred to concerns about its impact.

### **Children and young people’s mental health services: a brief outline**

Both schools and children’s mental health services are key partners for the organisations featured in this report.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or Children and Young People’s Mental Health Service (CYPMHS) are specialist services delivered by the NHS which either work with young people up to the age of 16 or up to 18. CAMHS are configured slightly differently in each of the countries of the UK

– but all provide prevention, early intervention and specialist services, mainly in the community or in outpatient services, with a small number of inpatient beds.<sup>11</sup> Many other agencies and organisations are also involved in supporting young people’s mental health, including schools, local authorities, the voluntary sector and youth justice.<sup>12</sup>

As the case studies in this report demonstrate and some contributors articulated, arts and culture organisations are part of the wider ecology of support for young people as well.

The issues facing children who need support seem similar across the UK, potentially with differences varying more within countries than between. Difficulties accessing treatment and long waiting times have been well documented over the last few years.<sup>13</sup> Children’s mental health services are also less well funded than adult services.<sup>14</sup>

There are efforts underway by the governments of the four countries of the UK to improve access and expand services for children and young people – both specialist services alongside prevention, early intervention and lower level help. This includes a range of measures to improve access to support via schools and to equip schools to develop whole-school approaches to young people’s wellbeing.<sup>15</sup>

**10** Mental Health Foundation, *State of a generation: preventing mental health problems in children and young people*, 2019.

**11** The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health: [www.acamh.org/topic/camhs](http://www.acamh.org/topic/camhs).

**12** *Ibid.*

**13** The Children’s Commissioner for England’s annual reports on the state of children’s mental health services give a good overview of issues and progress on reforms in England, [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services).

**14** See also: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services).

**15** In Wales, the Together for Children and Young People Programme (T4CYP) was launched in 2015. In England, key documents are the Five-Year Forward View for Mental Health (2016), NHS Long-Term Plan (2019) and the Government’s Green Paper on Children’s Mental Health (2017) and in Scotland, it is the Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027. In Northern Ireland, key documents include the Children’s Commissioner (NICCY)’s report, ‘Still Waiting’ *A Rights Based Review of Mental Health Services and Support for Children and Young People* in 2017, and the Children and Young People’s Strategy 2019-2029. Progress has reportedly been held up by the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly however.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE & ARTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

### Research

This report's parent publication, *Creatively Minded*, found the area of arts and mental health to be under-researched and concludes that while it is often stated that there is plenty of evidence on the psychological benefits of the arts, there have been few academic studies with many participants (see page 60 of that report).

As one might expect, the picture for children & young people is similar. A rapid literature review by Hilary Bungay and Leyre Zarobe in 2017 on the role of arts activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people (aged 11 to 18) found only eight eligible studies. (They undertook a broad search with no date limit, across creative art forms, and in community settings but included extra-curricular school activities).

They conclude that although the research evidence is limited, there is some support for providing structured group arts activities to help build resilience and contribute to the positive mental wellbeing of children and young people. The studies they reviewed demonstrated positive effects on children and young people's self-confidence, self-esteem, relationship building and a sense of belonging.<sup>16</sup>

The World Health Organization's 2019 review, *What is the evidence of the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing?*,<sup>17</sup> cites a few studies which provide evidence for the positive role of arts participation in children & young people's mental health, including for example children who experience PTSD following trauma such as abuse. However, the review concludes that there are a number of challenges researchers need to address to make the evidence base more robust.

Organisations featured in this report say that more evidence for the impact of the work they do would be useful to them (see page 60).

<sup>16</sup> Zarobe L, Bungay H. The role of arts activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people a rapid review of the literature. *Perspect Public Health*. 2017;137(6):337-347.

<sup>17</sup> *What is the evidence of the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing?* Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn. World Health Organization, 2019.



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# Case studies

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The *Wavelength* project, courtesy of Quench Arts.

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# 42nd Street

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## Active in:

Greater Manchester,  
in the community.

## Age groups we work with:

11-25 years, and younger children  
on some projects.

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**42nd Street is a mental health charity for young people. The Horsfall Centre is its creative programme.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Horsfall Centre enables us to expand the reach of 42nd Street and the impact of our work with young people, partner organisations, communities and supporters and make a positive impact on the mental health of young people and the wider population through engagement with arts, heritage and creativity.

We design and co-create our projects with young people to meet the diversity of their needs, issues and strengths. We engage with young people aged 11-25 years as participants and audiences, providing relevant, co-created opportunities for young people to work with high-quality artists to tell their stories, share their experiences and drive attitudinal, policy and practice change.

We get referrals from a wide range of sources including directly from young people, parents, carers, GPs, schools and universities, social workers, and A & E.

Once referred, the young people are offered a Service Assessment where they decide with the mental health practitioner what support they would like, including the Creative Programme, much like social prescribing. Young people can access The Horsfall at any stage of their journey with 42nd Street whether they are on a waiting list, receiving therapeutic support or have completed therapeutic support.

Last year, The Horsfall supported 250 young people on set projects. We generally work in groups of 8-12 which fit comfortably in the gallery space. Groups can be made up of young people from 42nd Street or from groups in Greater Manchester who we want to support due to their lack of opportunity to engage in art based and mental health supported work.

## Alone together

We recently completed a season of work which supported diverse groups from 42nd Street and other organisations to explore and share their experiences of loneliness and connection. The young people worked alongside professional artists and mental health practitioners to produce an immersive theatre piece exploring loneliness, a public realm mural, short films sharing the insights of young men in a Pupil Referral Unit, music and soundscapes reflecting urban life, an installation gallery piece bringing the outside inside to celebrate solitude, and evocative and moving poetry.

Isolation and loneliness have been an increasingly common presentation at 42nd Street and The Horsfall had already been involved in a creative participatory peer research project exploring the experiences of young people nationally with Manchester Metropolitan University.<sup>18</sup> These pieces of work continue to inform our training for artists and to influence local and national policy and practice around youth isolation.



Photo courtesy of 42nd Street Horsfall Centre.

Two of our weekly groups<sup>19</sup> are:

### **Creative Space**

Open to all 42nd Street young people, this is a two-hour session where we provide free arts materials and support to help young people take the first steps into our work.

The session ensures that there is always something a young person can attend. Much of arts-based project work is time-limited so we want to offer a regular space.

This session has the highest number of attendees – 81 individuals attended over the past year, with sessions often attracting 10-12 young people each week.

### **Creative Agents**

This project-based session is two hours a week for 13- to 17-year-olds. The young people who attend have a high level of need and the session offers connection and support. The group is very involved with supporting and designing The Horsfall and wider 42nd Street activities, for example curating and supporting creative projects, taking part in consultations, supporting internal interviews for staff, and running and judging competitions.

<sup>19</sup> Online at the time of writing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our work aims to support young people at each level of confidence and commitment. With this in mind, we have many additional projects that we are currently running which include: a portrait competition for all young people in Greater Manchester (25 years and younger); a photography competition for young carers; young artists in residence (three of these); and a gift shop (youth groups in Trafford design, make and sell craft items with a professional local artist).

We have developed partnerships with a wide range of organisations:

### **Cultural organisations**

We work with all of the large local art institutions from The Whitworth to The Royal Exchange and many smaller cultural and VCSE organisations. We do this in various ways including commissioned work and our 'Mental Health Training for Artists/Art Organisations' which we hope to work into a national standard in Arts and Mental Health. We also support young people to attend arts venues as this helps ensure that they feel able to and have knowledge of the arts when co-producing work.

### **Mental health organisations**

42nd Street benefits from strong links with voluntary and statutory mental health services across Manchester.

### **Education**

We have strong links with universities in Manchester and Salford – for example, arts students have run sessions with our groups.

We are developing our work with Further Education colleges through social prescribing and linking up with schools where we have counsellors.

### **Youth charities and local authority services for young people**

Many local charities use the free space in our Gallery. We have recently developed stronger links with organisations working with young

carers and care experienced young people and we are in the process of engaging with young people with SEND and who are physically disabled.

## **OUR IMPACT**

We undertake questionnaire-based work with young people mainly on projects. We have been a key member of the i-THRIVE<sup>20</sup> project developing an evaluation tool beneficial to young people, used by art facilitators and understood by NHS staff. We are due to pilot the evaluation tool shortly.

We see wonderful anecdotal impact from our work. Each young person has entered the group as an individual with heightened anxiety and has found the space to be a place where they can manage and take part. We hear voices grow in confidence, as young people start to share work and ideas and take new opportunities.

## **LOOKING FORWARD...**

We would like a fuller staff team to enable us to make more of The Horsfall programme and space, and enable us to expand our community-based work. We would also like to support arts-based activities in education and social care settings which benefit young people's agency, voice and mental health.

We feel we are in a unique place to develop a fuller understanding of the various arts-based practices and creative sessions and how they support positive mental health and young people to have a voice and effect positive change in society. Art works on so many levels and we would love to unpick this and support a regional and then national regeneration of art and creativity as a tool to support young people.

We have developed good links with various organisations supporting young people in Greater Manchester and think with our skills in youth work, mental health support and the arts we could do so much more.

**20** For more information on i-THRIVE, see [implementingthrive.org/about-us/i-thrive-implementing-thrive](https://implementingthrive.org/about-us/i-thrive-implementing-thrive).

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## 64 Million Artists & Young Minds

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### Active in:

Across the UK, in various settings including local communities, schools and universities, hospitals and care settings, and online.

### Age groups we work with:

14- to 25-year-olds for this project (but from 5 to 85 years old across our projects).

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**64 Million Artists champion the power of creativity to create positive change, individual and social. They were commissioned by the charity YoungMinds to put creativity at the centre of their Wise Up campaign led by YoungMinds' young activists which called on the Government to prioritise wellbeing in the education system.**

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity fighting for young people's mental health. 64 Million Artists were invited to work with their network of Young Activists to help co-create the second phase of their Wise Up campaign which called on the Government to rebalance the education system to recognise that student wellbeing is as important as academic attainment. 64 Million Artists' brief was to put the Young Activists' creativity at the heart of the campaign, at the same time as helping them to develop their own creative skills and wellbeing.

The Young Activists are aged between 14 and 25, come from across England, and have a wide range of lived experience of mental ill health. From this group, it was an open call to join the Wise Up project. We engaged 20 young people as active workshop participants in the co-design of the campaign – and many more as part of the wider project.

Over 12 months, we worked with the group to build their creative confidence and develop campaign ideas. Through creative workshops and online participation, the group designed and delivered a range of outputs including: a live event creating an illustration of the

'perfect school' inspired by hundreds of young people and members of the public; the concept and brief for a campaign film; and an interactive parliamentary event hosted by the Young Activists themselves in Westminster.

### OUR IMPACT

The main output from the project was a vibrant range of co-created campaign strands powered by the Young Activists' ideas, views, lived experiences, and commitment to raising the profile and public discourse around young people's mental health.

The overall campaign reached more than 2.7 million people on Facebook and Twitter. An open letter to Ofsted's Chief Inspector was signed by over 22,000 people, asking for wellbeing to be made a priority in the Ofsted inspection framework. A meeting between activists and Ofsted's Head of Policy was held to discuss positive changes schools need to make and how the Ofsted framework could influence these. The Wise Up campaign came Highly Commended in the category Best Advocacy Campaign in the Campaigns for Good Awards, 2019.

The response from Young Activists taking part in the Wise Up campaign was overwhelmingly positive. They reported that they felt a sense of empowerment, achievement and genuine creative contribution. The chance to meet Ofsted professionals and MPs in Westminster boosted their self-esteem and a feeling that they were being listened to. The chance to support other young people in coping with their struggles gave them a huge sense of purpose.



*YoungMinds young activists, courtesy of YoungMinds/64 Million Artists.*

YoungMinds' Campaigns and Communications Director, Tom Madders, said that it was a key part of the campaign's success that young people "were at the heart of every stage".

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Children and young people form a vital part of our community. We are already working with schools and community connectors across a number of our projects, including The January Challenge, Create to Connect, Festival Bridge, and in Rotherham developing the world's first Children's Capital of Culture. We also have a commitment to work intergenerationally.

64 Million Artists are developing an Everyday Creativity Champions Network across the UK and intend to include young people, and those who work with or care for them, in that model.

We are committed to connecting communities and developing creative resources, co-designed by young people themselves.

Our research work with adults with lived experience of mental ill health, in partnership with University College London, has found that everyday creativity and participation in group activities can have a hugely positive effect on participants' wellbeing. Not only can it reduce anxiety and low mood, it can enrich relationships by improving imaginative capacities, communication skills, and empathy. With more and more young people experiencing loneliness and social isolation, creative activities can also give young people a sense of purpose and belonging.

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## Avant Cymru

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### Active in:

Rhondda Cynon Taf in South Wales but also nationally and internationally. Work takes place in a wide range of community and health settings from theatres and museums to Welsh Centres, pubs and streets, to hospitals and day centres for the elderly.

### Age groups we work with:

5-99 years.

**Avant Cymru is a collective of artists who work in the Valleys of South Wales producing theatre and hip-hop theatre with young people. They also seek to provide professional pathways and local opportunities for young people to enter the arts as a career.**

### ABOUT THE PROJECTS

Generally young people come to us through work experience routes, but sometimes via a community venue, other Avant Cymru projects, youth clubs or word of mouth. There is a high incidence of mental ill-health in our area of South Wales and mental health issues often form a backdrop to what young people create.

Here are two recent projects.

#### Break dance and hip-hop theatre

Our focus on hip hop theatre for young people has grown organically as young people have seen what we do and approached us wanting to get involved.

It started when Open Art Surgery's Breakin' Convention<sup>21</sup> (a training and development week for hip-hop theatre run by Sadler's Wells) came to Wales and a young lad who was due to join us on work experience asked if he could join a session and if we ran regular classes. We didn't at the time as we were worried about the reliability of the sessions, given that we need

to tour, but we started classes at his school and he then attended with another lad. We then had requests from other young people who had done one-off workshops with us who wanted the opportunity to join in. We now have a regular community class running in a local Working Man's Club with more than ten young people regularly attending every week.

This has developed into various other opportunities:

- The young people took part in the RawFfest Youth Arts Festival at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff – demonstrating to audiences why they dance through sharing their stories.<sup>22</sup>
- Following a suggestion from some participants at schools in Barry and Newport we held a competitive jam in Treorchy Rugby club and young people came from Wales and from Hereford and Nottingham to take part.<sup>23</sup>
- One of the regular participants in this group is on the autistic spectrum and expressed his frustration about often being misunderstood. His brothers and sisters came to the jam to watch him – and together they decided to create a dance for the U.Dance<sup>24</sup> national festival, which would help others understand mental health better and work together to lift each other's health and wellbeing. Together they planned and helped us create a film about their journey called *Families who dance together, smile together*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> [www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2021/breakin-convention-2021-international-festival-of-hip-hop-dance-theatre](http://www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2021/breakin-convention-2021-international-festival-of-hip-hop-dance-theatre).

<sup>22</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbsov8il1JE&t=139s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbsov8il1JE&t=139s).

<sup>23</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwuBEirGrkY&t=4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwuBEirGrkY&t=4s).



Full Circle breaking competition 2019, courtesy of Avant Cymru, © Tracey Paddison.

The way we work with young people on work experience has caught the eye of other young people and they have approached us about arts and dance activities to support their needs.

### **Theatre and supporting young writers: *Shakespeare on the Mountain Top***

We have also run a community / professional co-production called Rhondda Rd, starring young people from a local school. These young people had a friend who was living in isolation

to safeguard her own mental health. She heard about the show and when an opportunity came around for the young people to work on their own production, she came to the session. She spoke with our Artistic Director about the arts and about how she would have liked more opportunities for stress-free learning at school.

As she mentioned she loved mountains and the freedom they offer, we decided to create Romeo and Juliet on the mountainside, giving her a role in the show. We created roles for other young people as actors and production

**24** U.dance is a programme of the organisation One Dance UK, which seeks to increase the number of performances involving young people and support those who organise them, [www.onedanceuk.org/programme/u-dance](http://www.onedanceuk.org/programme/u-dance).

**25** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRjsOYOjkh&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRjsOYOjkh&t=2s).



staff and created work experience roles too. She has since returned to college and will be returning to us to play a role in a new production of Twelfth Night.

As a result of this, we heard from another young person who asked if we would help her write and stage her own play. We have since helped her to develop a youth company (Our Voice Theatre Company).<sup>26</sup>

These shows grew like most of our work out of the requests of young people and in response to them wanting to improve their health and wellbeing.

## OUR IMPACT

*“ [Breakdancing] gives you a platform to express yourself, without having to speak if you don't want to speak. ”*

**Jamie (breakdancer and teacher)**

*“ This sport saved my life. I suffer with depression and have learning disabilities as well. But with my depression, this is the thing that kept me going. ”*

**Jamie (break dancer and teacher)**

*“ The good thing about Avant Cymru is that it is for young people, from young people. ”*

**Gaby 19, work experience participant**

## LOOKING FORWARD...

We have various projects underway. These include creating a piece which reflects art on prescription and the benefits of expressing or dealing with mental health through dance, art, music and words. We would like to see the benefits of hip hop for mental health recognised and as part of arts on prescription. We want to create community events to engage with as wide an audience as possible and to find out more about the needs of audiences and participants. We want to create professional pathways for local professionals and for young people wanting to develop a career in the arts.

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# City of London Sinfonia

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## Active in:

London (Southwark and Bromley) but with young people from across London and the South East.

## Age groups we work with:

8-18 (the majority are adolescent).

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**City of London Sinfonia (CLS) is a London based orchestra, which has a year-round participation programme of 'in-the-moment' and creative music-making projects with professional musicians at its heart. This includes a residency at the Bethlem and Maudsley psychiatric hospital school.**

recorded at workshops and shared at our public concerts and included at exhibitions at Tate Modern, Southbank Centre and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Over the course of the next three years this activity will extend to over 350 young people in hospital schools and similar settings.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

CLS musicians have been engaging in creative music making projects with students and staff at Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital School for the past three years. The young people are all service users at the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust and have a range of severe psychiatric and mental health diagnoses. In the last year a major post-doctoral research programme with King's College London has begun around the project.

The young people's musical skills are developed through composition, singing, listening and informal performance and recordings, and through this they are able to work together, express themselves and build confidence and self-esteem. Importantly, our musicians use an improvisatory, responsive and in-the-moment practice that allows them to meet every young person as an equal musician, and capture music making in-the-moment.

Each multi-week project responds to the orchestra's public performance programme, and recent projects have involved an exploration of music relating to birds and nature, and maths and science. Sound sculptures produced by sound artist and workshop leader for this project, Gawain Hewitt, have been embedded with music

## OUR IMPACT

Young people come to the Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital at a very low point in their lives. They are in the midst of suffering a crisis of mental ill health, presenting a range of diagnoses including depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, psychosis and eating disorders, accompanied by high levels of stress and anxiety. While being treated they continue their education at the hospital school, where they join a rapidly changing population of students, during which period of time the teachers support their individual learning needs.

We have learned that engaging a young person with a severe mental illness in any project activity is the project's biggest measure of success. It is also the key to unlocking each young person's potential. Engagement comes in many forms from something as simple as choosing to enter or stay in the classroom, through interacting with fellow students and adults who are part of the group and focusing for a few moments on an activity, to creatively exploring the instruments and technology we provide, listening to each other, making a creative choice and responding and being part of group compositions.

Many students lack confidence and self-esteem and have social difficulties. Dr John Ivens, Headteacher at the school, says that is why our projects make such an impact:

*“ Music has to be done socially. It brings people out of feeling bad about themselves and helps them focus on the ‘well’ parts. Students can interact in a non-verbal way, where listening is key, which doesn’t necessarily require them to talk about themselves. ”*

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Young people’s mental health was already a crisis of our time. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, health professionals are already anticipating a significant rise in diagnoses.

Over the next three years of activity we aim to develop more CLS musicians to work in these mental health environments. We also aim to widen the pool of artists leading this work, diversifying our workshop leaders

and providing them, alongside younger Fellows from the Royal Academy of Music, with specialist training that can be shared across the entire orchestral and wider music sector.

We will also establish other long-term residencies at Lavender Walk Adolescent Unit at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital and Addensbrookes Hospital in Cambridge.

We have begun a 10 month post-doctoral research with the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (IoPPN) at Kings College London to establish what clinical outcomes can be measured in this activity, which will also be shared across the sector.

We are also planning to broaden the scope and reach of our activity in the mental health sector through new Primary Care centres such as the Tessa Jowell Centre in South East London, and are leading orchestra sector conversation about how our musicians can play an active role in social prescribing.



*Creu/Create, courtesy of Venue Cymru and Conwy Arts Trust.*

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# Conwy Arts Trust at Venue Cymru

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**Active in:**

Conwy, North Wales.

**Age groups we work with:**

12-17 years.

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**Creu/Create is a project run by arts organisation the Conwy Arts Trust at Venue Cymru, a theatre and creative arts centre in Llandudno.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*Create* (Creu in Welsh) is an arts project working with young people aged 12–17 who are experiencing mental health difficulties. We work with up to 30 young people, split over two groups, on a medium to long-term basis. Participants are referred by their mental health practitioner (this could come from CAMHS, a GP, Social Services, school-based counselling or an educational psychologist).

The aim of the group is to help young people find new ways to express themselves, to give them an outlet away from the formality of school and medical appointments, and to provide them with a safe space to discuss, learn and grow.

Each session commences with a healthy meal, eaten together around a table whilst having conversations about the previous week, school, family, news – anything that the young people want to chat about. This family-style meal has proved enormously important. It can be challenging for new participants to join in initially but sharing food and stories is a powerful way to create connections with others around the table who are experiencing similar challenges. Having a full stomach also helps the young people concentrate and engage fully with the rest of the session.

Following the meal, our main activities commence. We offer a broad range of artistic opportunities from singing to designing computer games, and we ensure that each

session is participant led. Our participants have published poetry books, jointly painted a mural on the CAMHS waiting room wall, run visual arts drop-in sessions at a major arts festival and much more. The fact that the sessions are run in a theatre building has enabled us to welcome performers to talk with the group, as well as giving us the opportunity to attend shows. Each Christmas the two groups join together to eat a meal in the theatre restaurant and attend the pantomime. For many of our participants this would have been unthinkable before they joined us.

At each session, we have a variety of activities taking place with the young people choosing what they want to do. We also have space for peer discussions and for time-out with a group leader. Participants often support each other, whilst undertaking a creative activity, by sharing challenges, experiences and approaches they have found useful to cope with their difficulties.

*Create* takes place weekly, with participants attending fortnightly. The group is run by three creative practitioners, all of whom have a strong background in youth work, assisted by a sessional support worker.

When we devised *Create* we were acutely aware that we would be working with some very vulnerable people; our key priority was that we should not let young people down either by responding inappropriately to their needs or by only running a short term project. We established partnership-working with CAMHS and with the local Social Services, both of which have been invaluable in supporting and guiding us. The Principal Psychological Therapist at CAMHS arranged training for our leaders and is available at all times to offer advice. She sits on our steering

group which helps to put together policies for the project, such as planning the exit strategy for participants.

CAHMS also assisted in setting up our monitoring and evaluation processes, including pre-acceptance questionnaires, weekly mood charts and session evaluation.

## OUR IMPACT

*Create* has surpassed all our expectations. The power of finding a new way to express oneself through writing, drawing, creating has led to young people sharing their emotions for the first time both with others in the group and with the adults in their lives.

One young person told us:

*“I did something this evening I thought I'd never do – I made a friend.”*

Another had her poetry projected onto the walls of Conwy Castle as part of a light festival, providing an emotional moment when her Mum saw her work for the first time and said she had never understood how her daughter was feeling before. Referring to two young people, a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist reported:

*“I believe that the project has contributed significantly to their recovery and maintenance of their emotional wellbeing.”*

Whilst our ultimate measure of success is that the young person no longer needs us, we do have participants who want to continue after they are 17 and we also have referrals for young people past 16. We have secured a small amount of money to run a pilot project replicating *Create* for 17- to 30-year-olds to help them navigate the difficult transition from youth to adult services and from being in education to being an adult.

## LOOKING FORWARD...

We also hope to be able to extend *Create* to other locations and, in particular, to link up with other arts venues. We have shown that bringing young people together to explore their creativity in a supportive environment, away from school, can have a significant impact on their long-term wellbeing.

The need for services such as ours is growing and we would love to see our project, or similar projects, operate on a much larger scale to support more young people and their families.

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# Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

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**Active in:**

Edinburgh, Lothians and Fife.

**Age groups we work with:**

12+ for this project.

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**Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity is a grant giving charity, which distributes around £1.5 million a year to the hospital and to other children and young people's community healthcare settings. They fund an Arts Programme, delivering a wide variety of activities for children throughout the hospital, including for the last three years the CAMHS Inpatient Unit.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity's (ECHC) Arts Programme has been delivering a multi-disciplinary arts programme within the Tier 4 CAMHS Inpatient Unit<sup>27</sup> at Edinburgh's Royal Hospital for Sick Children since August 2017. There are twelve bedrooms within the unit and no more than twelve young people at any one time. Working with the CAMHS staff, we have developed a programme which runs twice weekly as part of the young people's weekly programme. Each session is an hour long, and they have been placed within the unit's timetable to help the young people to take their minds off a stressful session that they have just experienced or are about to experience, for example at weigh-in time, meal times or 1:1 meetings.

We use a small core group of artists on rotation who are familiar with the space, staff and young people, as we have found it can take time for the patients to build trust; using the same artists eases the young people quickly into the sessions, or they're more confident to say "no" if they don't want to join in. The sessions are run in the communal space within the unit so the young people are able to opt into whatever level they feel comfortable with, at any point.

If a young person is admitted into this unit, they have very little control of what is happening to them and when, which is why this arts programme is so important. We are giving these young people the opportunity to make choices and express themselves creatively, whether that's choosing to take part, choosing a colour or the activity – it empowers them. We respond to the needs and wants of the young people and encourage them to tell us what arts activity they would like us to provide. This has resulted in the programme developing from visual arts and music, to including 3D printing, animation and creative writing.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, artists are no longer able to deliver directly in the unit, so in response ECHC's Arts Programme team has developed Studio Boxes to reflect the arts which took place within the CAMHS inpatient unit. The contents of each box are designed with a specific art form in mind, e.g. print-making, creative writing, watercolour or acrylic painting and contain high-quality materials and simple child-led instructions. We have found that the Occupational Therapists have been able to reach the young people more effectively whilst using these boxes in their sessions.

<sup>27</sup> For more on how CAMHS services are organised, see: [www.acamh.org/topic/camhs](http://www.acamh.org/topic/camhs).

## OUR IMPACT

Feedback from participants over the last three years includes:

*“When we’re in here we have no power. They control everything, I feel so powerless. But when you let us make whatever we like and just let us get on without judging or interfering or asking us why we’re doing this, for that hour I feel like I have a bit of control again. Every week I get better at making stuff and sometimes I get better too because once I have what I’ve made in my hand I feel like I can do anything..”*

**Young person, 3D printing session**

*“This is the only good thing about being in here.”*

**Young person, Animation session**

On receiving the Studio Boxes, one young person said:

*“It feels like Christmas.”*

*“The watercolour boxes also went down really well. We have a couple of new admissions who have also enjoyed using them and have used the creative writing boxes as well. I think they are really helping to recreate the culture of participation in activity and giving things a go which is great to see.”*

**Occupational Therapist, CAMHS**

## LOOKING FORWARD...

As it is unlikely that we will be able to access the unit for the foreseeable future, we are piloting the delivery of remote sessions via live video link, with the first session being a collaboration between ECHC’s Arts and Activities Co-ordinator and an Occupational Therapist based on the ward. We will use the Studio Boxes to support these sessions, exploring further possibilities of the materials within.

At the end of this year, we are moving to a new state-of-the-art hospital, where the CAMHS inpatient unit and under 12s service will also move. We are very keen to support both services and as we will all be based in the same hospital, working collaboratively should become easier and more accessible.



“

I get counselling at 42nd street and my worker told me about it. I want to feel more comfortable with people, and I thought it would be a good way to start interacting with other humans since the group is quite relaxed.

There isn't any expectation for your art to be good so I find I can enjoy the process of drawing instead of focusing on the end result.

I have social anxiety and the drop in was the most accessible group for me at 42nd Street because there isn't pressure to talk to anyone or to stay for the whole two hours. I have started going to the Women's Group now as well and the drop in gave me confidence to do that.

**19-YEAR-OLD, HORSFALL CENTRE, 42ND STREET.**

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# East London Dance

## Active in:

East London, the London Borough of Newham for this project, in youth centres, schools and community centres.

## Age groups we work with:

10-16 years (this project), 0-90 (full East London Dance programme)

**East London Dance produce ambitious performances that attract wide audiences alongside projects to get all ages dancing. Its *On the Move* project with HeadStart Newham engaged young people in dance to promote wellbeing and emotional resilience.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*On The Move* is a dance participation programme, part of HeadStart Newham, funded by the Big Lottery and supported by Sadler's Wells. It tackles the growing prevalence of mental health problems amongst young people. The programme offers 10 to 16-year-old Newham residents free weekly dance sessions, creative holiday projects, performance opportunities, coaching, and advanced training progression routes, aimed to promote wellbeing and mental health resilience.

Our delivery team undertake resilience and Mental Health First Aid training, incorporating learning into teaching methodologies and dance practice. The programme has enabled East London Dance to employ a full time Youth Support Worker (a first for the organisation) to support dance delivery and offer coaching sessions to all participants. We currently work with more than 150 young people, and have engaged more than 350 over the past three years.

We receive referrals from the youth support team at HeadStart, schools, Pupil Referral Units, CAHMS and other local community providers, and also encourage self-referral through word-of-mouth and social media.

Newham has the most diverse population in the whole country with 72.5% of people coming from Black, Asian and Minority

Ethnic backgrounds. It also has a growing youth population with a quarter of residents under 18. However, 49% of the population live in poverty. We are a member of the pan-Newham partnership of community organisations who work with young people and their families, including detached youth workers and the police. Our dance partners include Sadler's Wells, Studio Wayne McGregor, English National Ballet, Avant Garde Dance and Boy Blue. They deliver our creative holiday projects, share best practice and provide space in-kind.

## OUR IMPACT

Demand for the programme is high with all courses over-subscribed. 96% of young people reported improved confidence and 100% have said they made new friends – a key factor in building resilience.

We have many success stories including Aless, a young person who came to us with severe depression. When we first met Aless she found it difficult to be around groups of people, she had a short attention span and wasn't attending school due to social anxiety. Although she had additional needs we found ways to support her participation by providing a safe space for self-expression and 1:1 support. Aless has since come a long way and is now attending full time education and has overcome depression. We receive great feedback from our participants and their families including:

*“ These dance sessions make my moods good. If I'm upset, after this class I am full of energy. ”*

**Participant**

*“It’s keeping [my daughter] fit and her mind active, she’s expressing herself... it’s made her more confident. She’s made a lot of friends.”*

**Parent**

In order to build stronger impact evidence, we’re currently part of a study led by a doctoral researcher from University of Roehampton looking at the social and emotional benefits of participating in dance classes, with a focus on black, Asian and minority ethnic young people.

### LOOKING FORWARD...

It takes time to build trusted relationships with young people as well as to develop and adapt effective teaching methodologies and project structures. Through HeadStart Newham we’ve been able to pilot activity leading to long-term sustained delivery that young people and parents are now relying on. As funding comes to an end in 2021 we want to ensure we find a sustainable way to continue provision and build on our learning.

Youth leadership and co-design have been critical to the development and success of the programme and we want to expand how we integrate youth voice into all aspects of our decision making as an organisation, especially as we move into a new home next year.

Having a full time Youth Support Worker as part of the East London Dance team is a game changer and we want to develop ways to integrate her skills and expertise across the breadth of our youth programme.

Through being part of the Roehampton study, we aim to build a greater understanding and evidence base for the impact of our programmes, enabling us to scale up the delivery across multiple boroughs and reach more young people. Alongside this we’re keen to develop a community of interest amongst artists and producers who are leading the way in youth arts and mental health work, ensuring good practice is shared and training programmes devised to upskill more practitioners.



**On the Move: An East London Dance project part of HeadStart Newham, © Charlene Davies.**

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# Fluid Motion Theatre Company

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## Active in:

Hampshire, in schools and colleges, as well as in community and arts venues.

## Age groups we work with:

6-65 years (on average).

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**Fluid Motion is a mental health theatre company based in Basingstoke, Hampshire. It creates performances on a wide range of mental health themes as well as delivering education and community work.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECTS

### Rum in the Gravy Boat

Our show, *Rum in the Gravy Boat*, was about our Artistic Director's lived experience of growing up with an alcoholic mother. In addition to touring, the show was commissioned in 2018 by Hampshire CAMHS to launch their 'Hear me' campaign focusing on children in care. The show enabled young people to contribute to wider conversations about mental health and is a tool to train, support and advise health and social workers in order to enhance their work.

### 1 in 10 Project

Our *1 in 10 Project*, a theatrical residency for schools and colleges, provides high-quality, focused, drama-based interventions for young people (9-18 years) to explore mental health, increase understanding and encourage positive wellbeing. Delivered by a theatre director, students have one day to create an 8-10 minute devised performance around a mental health topic they have chosen. Schools choose up to 25 students per day to take part, in consultation with the safeguarding lead and heads of year. Since the project started in 2018, we have worked in nine secondary schools and two primary schools and engaged with around 1,400 young people.

### All in the Mind Festival

Our annual *All in the Mind Festival* outreach project works with around 100 local children and young people each year, engaging them in creative activity to improve their health and wellbeing.

In 2020, we also ran a six-week music project with students at Queen Mary's College. Working with a professional composer, they created an original piece of music around the theme of 'nature and mental health' for use by a youth dance company.

## OUR IMPACT

Theatre audiences who saw *Rum in the Gravy Boat* remarked on how it opened their eyes and raised their awareness:

“Beautifully done, a show that needs to be seen to start the process of people understanding what it's like to live with someone alcohol dependent; extremely moving and very well done.”

Audiences of commissioned performances commented on the professional learning and development gained as a result of engaging and watching.

One social worker said:

*“The show has given me a real depth of insight into the lived experiences of children living with alcoholic parents which has already improved my knowledge and understanding far more than reading research on the same subject. It has already enabled me as a social worker, to be more empathic and well-informed with the families I am working with struggling with the same issue.”*

The impact on young people taking part in our *1 in 10 Project* showed on average:

- Students' knowledge of mental health issues rose by an average of 24%.

- Students' understanding of where to go for support or advice increased by 13%.
- Students' ability to talk about their own or someone else's mental health rose by an average of 25%.

A grandparent commented on how the project encouraged interaction and debate at home, saying:

*“She has been bottling that up for some time. Her mum has PTSD, it has been hard on her and we feel like she understands it a bit more now. Thank you.”*



## LOOKING FORWARD...

A lot of audience feedback suggests our shows should tour more to schools and colleges, but despite having an education programme built around each show, this has proved challenging in recent years and is an area we would like to develop.

The *All in the Mind Festival* is becoming a beacon for artists creating mental health related work. It is our vision that the festival provides young and emerging artists with the support and guidance needed for them to create mental health based performances. This could be achieved through a programme that gives specific support to artists, tips on creating outdoor theatre and links to enable connections with the voluntary sector and mental health organisations.

We would like to build a strong volunteering programme that actively engages with young people aged 16 and over. Volunteers make up the backbone of what we do as a company, from helping out on the *1 in 10 Project* to festival volunteers.

We want to encourage youth participation on our Board and will move to a registered Charity by the end of 2020 and aim to ensure that young people are represented within our organisation as much as possible.

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# Fresh Minds Education

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**Active in:**

Northern Ireland in schools, communities and social settings, and hospices.

**Age groups we work with:**

5 to 85 years.

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**Fresh Minds Education design educational programmes and resources in the field of emotional, mental health and suicide prevention for adults and children in Northern Ireland. Fresh Young Artists was funded by the ARTiculate programme, funded jointly by the Arts Council Northern Ireland and the Public Health Agency.**

**ABOUT THE PROJECT**

Fresh Young Artists was devised for young people aged 13-18 years old. Alongside this we run our regular Fresh Little Minds mental health and resilience programme which involves thoughtful, fun and stimulating activities for children aged between 4 and 12.

Both interventions are creative, trauma informed educational processes that support children and young people process their lives, develop an understanding of how and why they are who they are, and learn skills and strategies for developing resilience, cultivating a growth mindset whilst developing and celebrating individual character strengths.

Our interventions are evidence based, young person led, creative arts and health programmes, built upon Fresh Minds' AMBER approach to resilience.<sup>28</sup> Participants work with a professional artist and mental health facilitator to engage with mental health themes in a collaborative creative process, giving young people a high level of personal expression on issues important to them.

The three core elements to the process are:

- 1.** Explore themes and build awareness on mental and emotional health issues
- 2.** Learn to balance, self sooth and self-regulate oneself; learn how to make our bodies feel better; and cope when we are in stressful, challenging experiences.
- 3.** Feel empowered to make sense of personal experiences, exercise choice, providing an opportunity to heal and encouragement to see experience as an opportunity to grow.

This work saw a wide variety of creative responses from young people from recording albums to designing a graffiti mural and art installation.

One group of Fresh Young Artists worked with a musician and Mental Health Facilitator to learn new skills, write and create new music. They could also train to be a peer mentor for primary schoolchildren taking part in the Fresh Little Minds children's resilience programme. They relished the challenge and reported a boost to their wellbeing by being able to give back and support other children. The teens were all referred by a local community youth worker due to mental health concerns.

At one Post Primary School (secondary), 13 students who had been identified as at high risk of suicide worked with one of our trained facilitators and an artist to create several visual art works to explore their own stories and identify their own needs. They then successfully lobbied the school principal to allow students

**28** [www.freshlittleminds.com/the-amber-approach1.html](http://www.freshlittleminds.com/the-amber-approach1.html).



Photo courtesy of Fresh Minds Education.

to convert an unused school room into an AMBER resilience room for them to use during the school day.

Another school-based project also engaged the school's leadership team to devise their own school Mental Health Campaign which they launched at a special school assembly to start the new school term. In addition, they designed visual artwork for a unique set of positive mental health postcards which they hand-delivered to each student, increasing a sense of connection between students and the leadership team.

Fresh Young Artists came from both rural and urban areas of high social and economic deprivation. The majority had not previously engaged with arts-based activities, and had experience of poor mental health including self-harm, depression or bereavement by suicide. Many were on waiting lists for

overwhelmed services and needs were going unmet and all were referred by schools and community workers for individual reasons. For us, it is important to recognise that mental health is an issue for all children and young people in Northern Ireland, mainly as a result of the legacy of the trauma of the conflict. Targeting creates separation and diminishes the potential of trauma informed work in this post-conflict jurisdiction.

Over the last year, we have worked with 6,000 participants, including 4,000 primary school children, 400 post primary young people, 600 parents and more than 1,000 professionals including artists, mental health practitioners, social workers, therapists and teachers.

The partnerships we have across health, education and the creative sectors were integral success of the success of this work which



would also not have been possible without the vision of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and support from the Public Health Agency.

## OUR IMPACT

Data from surveys and interviews with participants showed the following impact on participants in the programme:

- reduced stress and tension level
- increased confidence around self-expression
- reported positive impact on self-confidence and self-belief
- increase in awareness of the factors that contribute to poor mental health feelings
- increase in coping skills
- knowledge of where to seek support for emotional distress or mental health
- increased understanding of the importance of cultivating positive feelings and increased likelihood of talking about feelings
- increases in friendship
- increased positive attitude to engaging with creative arts and mental health programmes in the future.

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Since developing Fresh Young Artists, we have been commissioned to support schools with primary to post-primary transition and through the Northern Area Health Trust to develop a creative intervention for 500 teenagers who are shielding during the COVID-19 crisis.

Our vision for this work is to increase the awareness and impact of creative trauma-informed education for children, teachers, professionals and families.

- We would like to partner with a higher education institution to develop a Creative Arts & Mental Health Academy to specialise in this field to contribute to research, thought leadership and practice in resilience and mental health across the UK. The UK is ideally placed to be a world leader in pioneering evidence-based solutions to a growing worldwide mental health crisis, and an academy that synthesises these would benefit individuals and organisations either currently in the sector or looking to enter it. Ideally this could lead to an arts and mental health qualification for practitioners in the arts, health and education sectors.
- We would also like to increase and scale our professional training/teacher training in using trauma informed approaches and creative methodologies, training groups of arts workers and mental health practitioners alongside each other using our AMBER curriculum.

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# Hampshire Cultural Trust

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## Active in:

Hampshire in schools, CAMHS clinics, community venues and arts organisations.

## Age groups we work with:

11-18 years.

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**Hampshire Cultural Trust runs 23 attractions across Hampshire from museums to galleries to arts centres, with a wide-ranging programme of community engagement. The ICE (Inspire // Create // Exchange) Project is a collaboration between Hampshire Cultural Trust and Hampshire CAMHS provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*The ICE Project* was established to promote the benefits of arts and culture on emotional and psychological health and wellbeing. Through ICE – Inspire // Create // Exchange, the project champions positive mental health, builds young people’s emotional resilience, enables them to learn something new, and to create content, tools and resources for use by other young people.

*The ICE Project* engages groups of young people in different artistic and creative projects. For each art project, there are three stages: Inspire – an inspiration point, such as a relevant cultural visit, experience or activity; Create – where groups of young people work with high-quality, professional artists (in varying art forms), whilst learning skills and working with peers to create artwork; and Exchange – these are showcasing opportunities, such as performances, exhibitions or online sharing of work created.

The project seeks to include three groups. These are: young people referred by CAMHS, young people identified as ‘at-risk’ of developing mental health difficulties, and young people engaged in schools. Young people access the programme directly through clinical referrals or through other support organisations like young carers groups, youth offending teams and LGBTQ+ support groups, or through their school. Partnerships and multiple referral and delivery partners are key to young people being able to access the programme, and to providing wrap-around support while they participate in *The ICE Project* activities.

The artwork created is wide-ranging from podcasts, animations, songs and poetry to photography, dance, theatre, films, visual art and journals. Each piece expresses and celebrates young people as individuals, highlights issues or topics they care about, or seeks to support others going through similar lived experiences.

Over the last three years we have worked with 103 young people directly referred from Hampshire CAMHS, 266 young people at risk of mental health difficulties, 1,145 young people in schools, and 79 arts and youth professionals.

*The ICE Project* is made possible through support and investment from Artsworld the South East Bridge, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and charitable donations.



Hampshire Cultural Trust *ICE Project's* workshop in a CAMHS clinic with artists from The Colour Factory, Winchester, © Strong Island Media.

## OUR IMPACT

From evaluations of Year 1<sup>29</sup> and 2<sup>30</sup> of the project, a few outcomes that emerge strongly are: self-reported increases in confidence and self-esteem; the project contributing to relaxation and fun; and the social and peer elements of engaging in creative activity with other young people who may be experiencing similar difficulties.

This is evident in the quantitative data, and also in the qualitative data:

*“I get to do things that I didn’t think were possible for me.”*

*“Coming here and doing art in general makes me feel very relaxed. And it makes me, when I come through those doors, relax, and everything that happened in school. I’m like ‘just leave it outside that door’, and you walk in and it’s a different positivity, being so connected.”*

Young people described being able to ‘switch off’ and to ‘be in the zone’ during the process of making art, with their minds free from anxieties that were present during other times of the day. The physical space was an important part of this freedom; creative spaces such as art centres are removed from and more relaxing than school, college or home.

Young people also said that arts and creative activities not only gave them new and better means to express themselves, but a means to express their thoughts and ideas about their mental health, which in turn led to other benefits such as self-awareness, relaxation and a sense of freedom.

*“I think it’s really important to stick with art because it is a form of release and a way to express yourself. I think especially in life when you are struggling and you have difficulties... it’s really a way to just vent without having to say words or form words.”*

Parents also fed back positively:

*“It’s just been great for them all to come together like this, where they can just be themselves without having to pretend that everything is ok. That’s so important.”*

## LOOKING FORWARD...

*The ICE Project* has placed health and wellbeing at the heart of Hampshire Cultural Trust’s social impact work. We will continue to work with Hampshire CAMHS, and will build and share our expertise more broadly with the network of artists and organisations to promote the benefits of arts on emotional and psychological wellbeing for young people. We are aiming to continue work in this area, both in partnership with CAMHS and other youth organisations. We will further develop our evaluation framework to evidence the benefits.

From our experiences, we’ve identified that more can be done to continue supporting young people after they have completed the initial 10-week project; our network of 23 cultural venues across Hampshire, and in particular our three arts centres, provide a perfect opportunity to develop a longer-term supportive relationship with participants. Some individuals who took part in *The ICE Project* have stayed in contact with us, volunteering within our venues or feeling empowered to attend other creative opportunities. We are now working on a model that puts long-term impact at the heart of the process, and are developing a number of ‘progression routes’ for young people within our venues, ensuring that support and access to high-quality experiences continue once formal sessions are complete.

<sup>29</sup> The ICE Project Year 1 evaluation report, Dr Ronda Gowland-Pryde, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> The ICE Project Year 2 evaluation report, Emma Langley, 2019.

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# Kazzum Arts

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## Active in:

London, Essex and Kent, in hospitals, Pupil Referral Units, primary, secondary and further education settings and in the community.

## Age groups we work with:

5-25 years.

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**Kazzum Arts is a participatory arts organisation for young people based in East London.**

with playfulness, curiosity and empathy. Build is funded by Young Londoners and Tower Hamlets Council.

## ABOUT THE PROJECTS

We provide opportunities for children and young people to explore their creativity at times in their lives when they are most in need of support. We work with participants who have social, emotional and mental health issues, communication needs and those who are living with trauma, displacement or within areas of social deprivation.

Our diverse pool of artists and facilitators deliver high-quality, accessible activities. We have developed a trauma-informed approach which engages young people in creative arts, building confidence, communication skills, relationships and engagement in learning.

Our programme includes:

### Build

Build uses multidisciplinary arts to increase self-esteem for young people aged 11-16 in Tower Hamlets' Secondary Pupil Referral Unit. Many of the young people we work with have had adverse childhood experiences, often resulting in trauma and mental health needs. Experienced artists respond to the interests of young people, creating a space for expression and dialogue using visual arts, drama and discussion. The application of these unique trauma-informed practices works alongside young people, accepting their often complex needs and behaviours to respond

### Apollo

Apollo uses combined arts to increase the wellbeing of children aged 5-16 in hospital wards including Whipps Cross and Royal London hospitals. This project currently takes place on general admission children's wards, however many of the young people are admitted due to mental health needs and concerns. Apollo is funded by Children in Need.

### Pathways

Pathways engages young asylum seekers and refugees aged 14-25 in multi-disciplinary arts. Young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are at a high risk of experiencing exclusion, isolation, prejudice and mental health issues. Our practice focuses on the mental health needs of young people, providing opportunities to regulate stress, reduce isolation and develop skills. Partners in this project include Praxis Community Projects, Young Roots, Caras, Shpresa, John Ruskin College and the Refugee Council.

We also run the **Speech Bubbles** project which uses drama to support children aged 5-7 with identified speech, language and communication needs in primary schools in Newham.

Children and young people participating in our programmes are usually referred by our partner organisations.

Over the course of 2018-2019, 2,486 young people participated in our activities, 302 workshops were delivered across our programmes, 167 artists, students and teachers took part in our training workshops, and 18 artists were supported through professional development, coaching and our Associate Artist scheme.

## OUR IMPACT

Our work makes a broad impact upon children and young people's confidence and communication skills. We observe an increase in participation and willingness to develop relationships and explore their creativity. We use multi-modal evaluation processes across our programmes. Some of our findings include:

### Build

#### Tower Hamlets Pupil Referral Unit

85% of young women participating in our workshops reported feeling more relaxed and calmer as a result of the weekly workshops.

*“I get anxiety and it's good to talk to people about that.”*

Participant

### Apollo

#### Whipps Cross and Royal London Hospitals

90% of children reported feeling less isolated and lonely in hospital through increased friendships, increased sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment and interacting with a variety of facilitators.



Photo courtesy of Kazzum Arts, © Becky Bailey.

*“Sitting here and making this artwork has really taken my son’s mind off being in hospital.”*

**Parent**

*“I hope I don’t get discharged this afternoon – I want to keep making my bit on the display.”*

**Participant**

## Pathways

### Young people seeking asylum and refugees

78% of young people said that coming to Young Voices “helped me to feel better or happier in myself”.

*“Groups like this are important when you come from a different country. It’s like being in a family.”*

**Participant**

In the last three years our creative workshops have made a huge difference to young people, with 95% reporting that the project had helped to increase their confidence and that their voices had been heard, and 85% reporting that the workshops had helped to increase their social networks and reduce their isolation.

*“First time since coming to the England I can be myself, best day so far.”*

**Participant**

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Our vision is to continue our collaborative approach, developing relationships with organisations, environments and funders who share our values and support our approach.

We would like to engage in interdisciplinary research opportunities, working alongside specialists who are interested in the efficacy of our work and impact of participatory arts activity upon both practitioners and participants. We seek to establish greater links with Foundations, Patrons or Individuals who can raise the profile of our charity’s activity and develop fundraising opportunities, audiences and the reach of our work.

We aim to increase the youth voice within our organisation and establish greater opportunities for those with lived experience of our programmes to guide the activity and ensure that our practice remains relevant and inventive to our beneficiaries.

We seek to increase the capacity of the organisation to ensure that staff are able to fully focus on their primary roles and responsibilities and ensure that Kazzum Arts is financially secure and resilient.

# Kids in Control

## Active in:

Belfast and surrounding areas in schools, communities and youth groups.

## Age groups we work with:

12-18 years all-ability youth & young adults with disabilities.

**Kids in Control (KIC) is a physical theatre company for young people of all abilities and backgrounds. They have worked with the Suicide Awareness and Support Group on theatre projects supported by the Arts Council Northern Ireland's ARTiculate funding programme: FYI (For Your Information) (2018-19) and TBH (To Be Honest) (2019-20).**

## ABOUT THE PROJECTS

Both FYI & TBH were 10-month phased, incremental physical theatre creative learning programmes for marginalised young people in North and West Belfast, which enabled participants to identify and explore challenges around mental health, specifically around social media use, while seeking creative ways to harness its power to communicate positive messages and important information.

The projects were developed from focus groups we held with teens who identified social media as having a profound, pervasive and formative influence on their lives. The group found that teens are peer led and seek advice/support from each other. They have a high level of concern about social media impacting on mental health but feel ill-informed to support or guide each other.

Through the projects we wanted to raise awareness, reduce stigma and strengthen resilience.

We developed and delivered both programmes in partnership with the Suicide Awareness and Support Group (SA&SG), a community organisation which supports families who have lost loved ones to suicide and individuals who are in suicidal crisis, and raises community awareness around the issue of suicide. Both Kids in Control and SA&SG seek solidarity within the community sector, bringing different skill sets and networks, and an eagerness to develop a healthy society through sharing and learning that strengthens early intervention opportunities for youth.

The programmes were delivered in four phases:

**Phase 1:** was recruitment/familiarisation and we held outreach taster workshops in multiple community settings, providing opportunities for young people to sample physical theatre and engage with the subject creatively.

**Phase 2:** in the second phase, we worked with a group to develop their ideas through creative skills development, trust work, group building, storytelling/devising activities. Participants received suicide awareness training and developed a work-in-progress podcast.<sup>31</sup>

**Phase 3:** focused on enhanced skills development around personal development and emotional intelligence. The young people also produced a short film<sup>32</sup> and resource pack and launched the film on social media.

**Phase 4:** in the final phase, we held one-off resilience workshops in schools and community groups around the film and resource pack the young people had made, involving peer leaders from the programme.

<sup>31</sup> FYI's podcast by Kids in Control is on their Facebook page here: [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=304905103660302](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=304905103660302), and a podcast by TBH here: [www.facebook.com/kicproject/videos/281556156024629](https://www.facebook.com/kicproject/videos/281556156024629).

<sup>32</sup> A short film made by the FYI project was featured on BelfastLive here: [www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/belfast-teens-release-film-tackling-15274693](https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/belfast-teens-release-film-tackling-15274693).



The number of young people in both FYI and TBH varied, with a core group of 15 and 16 respectively. We estimated we reached a wider audience of 30,000.

## OUR IMPACT

We saw a wide range of positive impacts from the projects.

Young people became comfortable and empowered to discuss issues around mental health and suicide, feeling confident they knew how and where to direct others feeling down or suicidal. During the programme, four young people unconnected to the project had appropriate interventions put in place as a result of learning within the programme.

*“The most important thing I’ve learned is how to deal with situations like these and where to go for help.”*

Participants also became more attentive to their own mental health with more empathy for others:

*“The project has brought me more awareness about the sort of help and support I could get.”*

Feedback highlighted that using arts as a vehicle to open discussion made the subject accessible and engaging, and using physical theatre that is high energy and fun supported participants to feel comfortable in their bodies and to make the connection between physical and emotional wellbeing.

The projects reduced isolation for participants who formed new friendships and felt part of a group. They developed exceptional teamwork ability, keen to share their creative skills and be a positive role model for their peers.

The process of exploring ideas developed self-esteem and confidence and participants gained a sense of control through recognising their strengths, as well as a sense of achievement and pride over the work they produced.

Recognition of their achievements has given them confidence to get involved in other arts projects.

Guardians were also proud of participants’ achievements and reported that this showed in other areas of their lives:

*“This film was about the struggles young people face online and with thoughts of suicide. My son has faced and overcome a lot with his own mental health and I couldn’t be prouder of him and the confidence he has gained.”*

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Our vision is that *young people are engaged, empowered and their voices amplified to lead the change in how mental health is discussed and perceived in our society.*

KIC and SA&SG would like to secure an ongoing rolling creative programme that focuses on mental health, led by peer leaders and participants who bring the content, thus ensuring that there is always relevance and meaning for their peers. FYI & TBH have helped us to reimagine how we communicate with teenagers about mental health, and we need the scope to continually explore and identify new and relevant early intervention creative strategies.

*“The ARTiculate programme and in particular the use of creative processes has allowed us to get our message out to a wide and diverse audience. In particular it has allowed us to reach a teen audience, which is always challenging. The arts are definitely a vehicle we will continue to use to support us in our aim of reducing stigmas and building resilience.”*

**Margaret Walker, SA&SG**

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# Noise Solution

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## Active in:

East of England and internationally.

## Age groups we work with:

Mostly 11+.

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**Noise Solution is a digital youth work organisation<sup>33</sup> which specialises in improving the wellbeing of young people that education, local authority and mental health services struggle to engage.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Young people are referred to us from a wide range of sources, including CCGs and CAMHS teams, schools and alternative provision teams. We have just started receiving referrals to deliver digitally from other areas of the country (both from Virtual Schools in Yorkshire and Birmingham working with youth in care).

The theoretical lens for the mentoring programme is Self Determination Theory (SDT), arguably the most well evidenced framework for impacting upon wellbeing and motivation, which we have embedded into a mentoring programme. That mentoring is enhanced, captured and safely shared with stakeholders via our digital online platform. Our mentoring, which happens face-to-face and/or online, often revolves around music and music technology (although it could also revolve around another art form or other activity as well).

Music technology is a fantastic tool with which to make a young person feel good at something they value, quickly. The music, a sense of playfulness and the relationship with the musician/mentor are all incredibly important in this process.

Our music mentors are music professionals, more often than not from non-formal musical backgrounds, rock musicians, producers or DJs, all well versed in music technology approaches

to production. Sessions with mentors take place over 10 weeks (for 2 hours a week),<sup>34</sup> with musicians travelling to participants' homes for the first five weeks, and then transferring sessions to a recording studio close to the participant. Sessions focus on creating whatever music the participant is excited to listen to (this includes a lot of drill, hip-hop, drum and bass, and grime, but not exclusively). The mentoring is purposefully reactive to those interests, with a view to making them self-sufficient in using readily available musical software, so they can carry on after sessions finish.

Even more importantly, we digitally capture and safely share participants' successful experiences and reflections of their sessions within our platform with the adults that are important in their lives. By doing this, we aim to create protective factors around youth that are well proven to improve wellbeing. Those protective factors are facilitated by fostering a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness within our participants, all evidenced psychological needs within SDT, leading to improved wellbeing. Improvements in wellbeing have been shown to increase education, engagement and health outcomes.

Our online platform presents participants' achievements to whoever they invite into their feed in a way that mirrors everyone's everyday social media experiences, so people can interact with the feed. It is the ability for the young person to easily capture and 'see' themselves creating and reflecting on how it makes them feel that plays a large part of our success. We are scaffolding their ability to process their own sense of competence against a

**33** A short two-minute introduction video to Noise Solution can be found here: [vimeo.com/418037450](https://vimeo.com/418037450).

**34** During the COVID-19 pandemic, mentoring was entirely moved online.

backdrop where the world is often telling them they are not competent. Being recognised as successful by their important adults reinforces these messages of competency. Sessions are specifically delivered in a way designed to foster psychological needs, which in turn are proven to improve motivation and wellbeing.

We have invested significantly in building into the platform the ability to capture and analyse NHS wellbeing scales, which are then automatically compared against national averages and analysed for statistical significance and range of change of wellbeing – all of which is reportable. We can link validated wellbeing data to stories told by participants which are co-created by their family and key workers.

## OUR IMPACT

We have observed three years of highly statistically significant impacts upon the wellbeing of a population consisting of prolific offenders, young people who are school phobic, Tier 2 and 3 mental health referrals, and young people excluded or on the edge of exclusion from school. We have the ability to link data points (otherwise known as people!) across that population level data and show you their individual stories, with their voices front and centre. Case studies also being co-created by their family and keyworkers through their responses and interactions with their participant's feed. We have built the creation of these 'case studies' into our process and by sharing these stories as they develop, we are ethically, actively, leveraging them to improve outcomes, without the capture of case studies having any resource implication for us as an organisation.

An independent impact audit replicated our own findings of statistical significance (p.000073). We have also recently had completed an eight-month independent Social Return On Investment study which demonstrated that every £1 spent on delivery with Noise Solution saw a £3.34 saving made by families and statutory services.

## LOOKING FORWARD...

We are currently working hard on developing our digital platform to make it a licensable product for third sector organisations worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this work – with funding now available that recognises the opportunities our platform and approach presents for engaging populations that others have struggled to, safely, in their communities using digital tools safely to improve wellbeing. Historically, voluntary sector organisations have struggled to prove impact and we believe we have a well-tested approach and IT infrastructure that, when combined with the extensive research we have done around approaches that best leverage impacts on wellbeing and motivation, will improve and prove the results of many of these organisations worldwide. Our pedagogy and scales have all been chosen with universal applicability and scaling in mind and are culturally responsive.



My name is Aminat and I am a young migrant. I discovered Kazzum Arts through my participation in ‘Brighter Futures,’ a regular group that Kazzum run as part their ‘Pathways’ programme, with another charity called ‘Praxis Community Projects’.

As a volunteer, I have been involved with Kazzum for well over a year now, helping out in the office with various tasks whenever I’m able to. Working with Kazzum is very exciting. I have learnt so much about how creativity can be used to make difficult topics easier to share.

My first outside venture with Kazzum was around summer 2019 when I, along with Kazzum staff went into schools to discuss, educate and raise awareness about refugees. As a young migrant myself, it was very productive and inspiring to be able to educate young people about life as a migrant and share my experience with them. Over the past year, I have been involved with a number of other projects and events organised by Kazzum.

My latest project with Kazzum was to help create and write a script for an animation project that was to be used during this year’s Refugee Week. It was also very exciting to record the voiceover for the animation.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Kazzum because the staff are always very supportive. They made my experiences easier to share and were always there to listen to me and my ideas. I enjoyed that my ideas and views are always very well respected. They treat me like one of their own – like another colleague as opposed to being a volunteer or participant.

My space is always respected and participation is never imposed on me. Everyone there is always very cheerful and passionate about whatever project is being worked on. It truly is an honour to be able to volunteer at Kazzum.

**AMINAT, KAZZUM ARTS.**



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## Place2Be

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### Active in:

Schools across England, Scotland and Wales. Until April 2020 The Art Room worked in fixed locations in primary and secondary schools across London, Oxford and Edinburgh. A new mobile model is currently being developed which will be piloted in London over the coming year.

### Age groups we work with:

5-16 years.

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**The Art Room is a service offered in schools by mental health charity Place2Be which uses art-making to support children and young people with emotional difficulties.**

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Art Room is a group intervention that uses art-making to support children and young people with emotional difficulties. Working in mainstream education, we help children and young people grow in confidence and develop the social skills they need to engage in learning and thrive in life. The Art Room is one of the services which Place2Be offers to schools in order to support the wellbeing of children, young people, families and school staff across the UK.

Using art as a therapeutic vehicle, we provide gentle, early intervention, working in familiar places where children already spend their day. In sessions children transform everyday objects, like a chair or box, into a unique piece of art. The therapeutic work gives each child an opportunity to explore their identity, feelings and creativity, while expressing their emotions, developing their social skills and growing in confidence. Turning a mundane item into a breath-taking piece of art is also a perfect metaphor for the transformation children experience during their time in The Art Room.

When working with a school we develop close working relationships with staff so that we can think together about supporting their school's wellbeing. Schools are asked to nominate one key pastoral worker to act as the 'Art Room link'. This person could be the headteacher, deputy or assistant head, SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), Family Link Worker or Pastoral Care Worker. The designated link person meets with the Art Room manager in order to think together about referrals.

The Art Room worked with 825 children in the 2018/19 academic year. By delivering The Art Room as a mobile service in the future, we will be able to support a greater number of children.

Place2Be works together with other organisations who share our mission to improve children's mental health.<sup>35</sup> We are one of eight charity partners tackling mental health stigma and developing innovative new mental health services as part of Heads Together.<sup>36</sup> In 2018, the Heads Together partners Place2Be, the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families and YoungMinds, launched Mentally Healthy Schools, a website which provides high-quality mental health resources and advice for primary schools.<sup>37</sup>

**35** You can find out more about Place2Be's different partnerships here: [www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/our-team/working-with-other-organisations](http://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/our-team/working-with-other-organisations).

**36** Heads Together is a mental health initiative spearheaded by The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge: [www.headstogether.org.uk](http://www.headstogether.org.uk).

**37** [www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk](http://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk).



Photo courtesy of The Art Room at Place2Be.

## OUR IMPACT

Our work has real impact. When children come to The Art Room, their emotional and behavioural difficulties are making it hard for them to cope at school. Most return to the classroom feeling more self-assured, more socially skilled and far better equipped to learn.

*“She is more confident in work and class discussion and finds it easier to talk about her emotions. Her confidence has led to progress in her studies.”*

**A member of school staff**

*“Pupils who didn’t have faith in themselves and never put their hands up are now excited to shout about what they’ve achieved. I always ring-fence The Art Room in my budget – it’s a small price to pay for the effect they have on the lives of my children.”*

**Head Teacher**

*“Sometimes at school I find it hard to do good work, but when I come to the Art Room I make amazing art. The Art Room helps me to believe in myself.”*

**Participant, aged 6**

*“ Since I go to The Art Room I am calmer in class and I don’t throw chairs. ”*

**Participant, aged 12**

We measure the impact we have on children’s wellbeing through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. This has shown an improvement in 83 per cent of children referred with severe difficulties, and 70 per cent of all children who attended the service. Children improved most in the areas of emotional wellbeing and developing positive peer relationships. There is also evidence that one child attending The Art Room has a positive impact on their whole classroom learning environment. There was an improvement in 61% of children who teachers identified as causing difficulties in their classroom learning. In this way, the intervention can have a beneficial impact on a whole school community.

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Our vision for the future involves three key stages:

### **1. Developing a mobile version of The Art Room and enabling this to reach as many schools as possible.**

Our aim for the immediate future is to redesign the way we deliver The Art Room service so that we can reach more children and young people. This will entail creating a model in which practitioners visit a school and set up a welcoming and creative environment in which weekly group sessions can take place.

### **2. Using art to support wellbeing in school communities.**

We believe that enabling a whole school community to thrive creates an environment for its children and young people to do so too. Once we have established our new models work with groups of children, we want to broaden the scope of our work to include parents, carers and staff. We are interested in offering supportive and educative spaces for adults, as well as offering opportunities to nurture relationships between adults and children.

We have begun to explore this with our current Art Room at Home project series. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Art Room team have developed a series of projects for parents, carers or teachers to do with their children together. Each project is designed to help nurture the relationship between the adult and the child and support their wellbeing through exploring themes associated with the pandemic.

### **3. Supporting wellbeing through art in the community**

The final part of our vision is to support wellbeing through connecting to a wider community. In the past this has taken the form of installing and exhibiting children and young people’s art in their schools and local community. We would like to develop exciting collaborations and partnerships with other cultural organisations to more widely showcase art made by the communities we work with.

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# Quench Arts

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## Active in:

primarily Birmingham & Solihull (& the wider West Midlands), working from our base and in other community settings such as mental health community hubs and secure, acute and forensic inpatient mental health wards/hospitals.

## Age groups we work with:

12-25 years for youth wellbeing projects. We also run projects for adults.

**Quench Arts currently runs two creative music making projects for children and young people with mental health conditions: Wavelength and Plugin. These are supported by Youth Music, BBC Children in Need, the Clive & Sylvia Richards Charity, Birmingham & Solihull music education hubs and project partners.**

to highlight success, plus a concert showcasing music created. Participants can continue to engage in group elements beyond their first year and develop into peer support roles. We also offer ten group sessions to two inpatient settings during school holidays. Overall, we engage 45-60 young people annually on Wavelength.

## ABOUT THE PROJECTS

### Wavelength

Wavelength is a community-based programme for young people aged 12-18. 20 new participants are recruited each year, signposted from referral partners including local mental health teams (Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust and Forward Thinking Birmingham), plus schools, music education hubs and other support organisations.

Wavelength works with young people with a range of mental health diagnoses, from an early detection/intervention basis through to those who are being discharged from acute/forensic inpatient settings. Young people progress from individual sessions to accessing group songwriting, band development and recording/production sessions, building skills and confidence whilst writing their own original music.<sup>38</sup>

There are two social events a year and an annual CD of original individual and group compositions is produced as something tangible

### Plugin

Plugin is a creative music and wellbeing project for young people aged 12-25 who face barriers to music-making due to being mental health inpatients or being unable to access community-based provision. It uses accessible music technology to develop skills and creativity, progressing young people onto industry standard software and/or acoustic instruments.

Plugin is based in five settings across Birmingham – Birmingham Children’s Hospital Parkview Clinic, the Blakesley Centre, Ardenleigh Forensic CAMHS, Woodbourne Priory Hospital (private CAMHS) and Men’s Forensic Services (working with under 25s). Each setting has a lead music leader plus a developing young music leader (aged 18-25) visiting weekly. Overall 30+ young people per year benefit from Plugin sessions (20 having individual sessions). We also work in partnership with Birmingham Music Education Hub organisations to provide performers to visit each setting, so that participants can be inspired by other young musicians.

**38** Sample some music from Wavelength: [www.soundcloud.com/quench\\_arts/sets/wavelength-project-all-cds](http://www.soundcloud.com/quench_arts/sets/wavelength-project-all-cds).





The *Wavelength* project, courtesy of Quench Arts.

Both projects are focused on similar outcomes, using creative music-making to improve young people's musical skills as well as to build their emotional literacy, self-esteem and connections with peers, developing transferable skills to support resilience, acceptance and recovery.<sup>39</sup> Where possible, young people can move between projects when they are discharged, aiding their transition.

## OUR IMPACT

We use a variety of tools and processes to measure the impact of our work. On joining our projects, participants complete baseline activities to help us gather, through creative means, their self-assessed responses to

particular statements informed by standardised validated tools such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, Outcomes/Mental Health Recovery Star and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, as well as Youth Music's evaluation builder tools. Baselines are revisited and analysed to measure individual and cohort progress. The data we have collected so far shows significant levels of improvement in the young people's self-assessed 'scores' regarding their level of musical ability, confidence, self-esteem, resilience and their ability to connect with others on the project. For example, across year one of Plugin, 82% of core participants felt that they improved in their ability to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions through their music making.

<sup>39</sup> Sample some music from Plugin: [www.soundcloud.com/quench\\_arts/sets/plugin-project](http://www.soundcloud.com/quench_arts/sets/plugin-project).

Young people also set personal aims against the Five Ways To Wellbeing (New Economics Foundation<sup>40</sup>). Over three years of Wavelength, 102 personal wellbeing aims were set, with 76 met and 13 exceeded.<sup>41</sup>

Whilst statistics are useful, we find that the context and discussions around young people's baseline reflections provide a fuller, more interesting story. We work with families and other professionals to get their feedback on impact and to gain further context/evidence to inform our participant case studies. Occupational Therapists' MOHOST (Model of Human Occupational Screening Tool) observations from sessions can add useful information and evidence where this is used in settings. Our case studies also show how music specifically can be beneficial:

*“ I watch him go out of the door when he goes on leave and he looks so happy with his guitar on his back... it is like his friend and he is so proud. He turns to it when he has had a bad day and also when he has had a good day... he loves music and he loves these sessions. ”*

**Nurse, Parkview Clinic**

There have been wider benefits, as highlighted by one Occupational Therapist:

*“ One individual, having not attended activities outside her school before, attended weekly despite her father having a stroke and other significant pressures on the family. One participant had been selectively mute and after nine months began to communicate verbally with her care coordinator. Another participant, having attended five different school placements, all of which were unable to meet her needs and the last of which had advised she was unable to access learning, engaged with the expertise of the musicians, demonstrating that with the right help this was not the case. ”*

## LOOKING FORWARD...

Our vision is to be able to reach and engage more young people. We know that projects like ours can help keep people well, aid transition between inpatient/community provision, support the journey to self-acceptance and recovery, and also have a much wider positive impact on the whole family. We would be keen to develop our work and partnerships, potentially expanding to other local areas, where there is a need and demand. We also have plans to widen the age range of those that we are engaging, working on an early intervention basis with primary aged children and are developing a project to build attachment with babies and early years children, where parents might be at risk of, or already, facing postnatal depression.

<sup>40</sup> [neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing](http://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing).

<sup>41</sup> Further Wavelength evaluation data can be found at: [www.quench-arts.co.uk/wavelength-seminar](http://www.quench-arts.co.uk/wavelength-seminar).

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# Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival

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**Active in:**

All across Scotland, with events taking place in arts venues, community centres, hospitals, and schools.

**Age groups we work with:**

8-26 years.

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**The Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival (SMHAF) is led by the Mental Health Foundation Scotland and takes place in May each year. The theme of the 2018 festival was Beginnings, both to mark the festival's move to May for the first time, and to celebrate Scotland's Year of Young People.**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

In 2018, the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival developed four new projects with young people, ensuring there was a strong youth voice. This work was supported by the Year of Young People 2018 Event Fund, managed by EventScotland.

The **SMHAF Youth Panel** invited young people aged 14-18 from three secondary schools in the Glasgow area to curate multi-arts events in their schools and contribute to shaping the wider festival programme. Pupils from Clydebank High School, Lourdes Secondary School and Trinity High School (Renfrew) participated in workshops led by artists and festival partners to gain skills in arts curation, film programming, marketing and digital journalism. They then developed events for various age groups featuring spoken word artist Jenny Lindsay, short films curated from the SMHAF 2018 official selection, and activities to challenge mental health stigma and raise awareness. Young people had support from professionals in a number of areas and were able to choose the winner of the Youth Perspective Award at the festival, as well as leading on the organisation of mental health arts events at their own schools, using the skills that they had gained throughout the series of workshops.

We were keenly aware of recent government figures showing that Scottish pupils needing classroom help for mental health problems more than doubled between 2011 and 2015, and of a study by the World Health Organization, published in March 2016, which showed that between 2005 and 2012 there was a 54 per cent rise in the number of children being prescribed anti-depressants in the UK. Meanwhile a 2016 survey of 338 British school leaders found 55 per cent reporting a large rise in pupils with anxiety and stress, with almost 65 per cent saying they struggled to get mental health services for pupils. Research also shows that half of adult mental health problems begin in childhood.

In light of this, we felt that it was more important than ever that SMHAF engages with, and is informed by, young audiences and also that those young audiences are involved in shaping our programme.

All elements of the projects were completely informed by and co-designed by young people throughout the process; this was supported by the teams at the partner organisations. Vox Liminis, Into Film and Cultured Mongrel all have a history of projects that are co-designed with young people. In addition, the engagement of a Children, Families and Young People Manager at the Mental Health Foundation in 2017, meant that we were in a good position to design the proposal with young people.

Two projects were also showcased at the festival, developed in partnership with Vox Liminis and Into Film Scotland respectively.

**KIN**, an arts collective of 14- to 25-year-olds who have been affected by the imprisonment of a parent or sibling led by Vox Liminis, presented CON(SCRIPTED), an immersive interactive performance piece, developed through working with spoken word artist Leyla Josephine, visual artist Alice Dansey-Wright and sound designer Ben Fletcher. The show was performed to a full house of 100 people at Saint Luke's in Glasgow. Their stories and experiences fully informed the event and the voices of young people were apparent and visible, making it a powerful final product that was designed by young people. In addition, the young people met regularly with the team to design and plan the event.

**Into Film Scotland** led a youth filmmaking initiative, working with pupils from their existing film clubs across Scotland to create a short film exploring mental health and the theme of Beginnings, supported by filmmaker Yasmin Al-Hadithi. Young people took part in discussion events about existing mental health films and practical activities to develop their film-making skills. Their resulting film was screened at the Youth Perspective event during the SMHAF 2018 film programme at CCA Glasgow and to peers in schools.

For **Dancing Libraries**, SMHAF Associate Artist Emma Jayne Park worked with dancer James Fogerty in Hillhead Library in Glasgow for a month, collaborating with three Primary 5 groups from a local school to create site-specific dance performances inspired by books for children and young people that work with the themes of mental health. The short films they produced were displayed at the library.

## OUR IMPACT

Festival events reached around 12,000 people, a 20 per cent increase on what we originally estimated. 748 young people (aged 8-26) took part in the activities and events.

Audience evaluation forms distributed at events yielded a very positive response:

*“ Young people were mind-blowing, audio/visuals amazing. Loved it. ”*

*“ It made me think of all the young people that I work with; you inspire me every day and remind me why I do my job. Young people are our future, nurture and empower them to be the best they can. ”*

*“ I found it moving and we shouldn't judge people. ”*

*“ Mental health is so, so similar to physical health which is why you should care equally. ”*

*“ I liked the rawness and honesty of the individual stories. ”*

## LOOKING FORWARD...

SMHAF remains committed to engaging with children and young people in its work. Last year's festival (2019) included a Family Shorts programme of short films engaging young minds in mental health matters, exploring wellbeing, worries and emotions in creative and colourful ways. The films are currently available to view online as part of SMHAF's ongoing creative response to the coronavirus lockdown. The Mental Health Foundation is also offering guidance on how to talk to children about the virus.

For future festivals we are keen to revive the youth panel that we first established during our 'Beginnings' programme, and are currently developing a plan for a new artist network that will include a mentorship programme.

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## Soft Touch Arts

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### Active in:

Leicester and across Leicestershire and Rutland in youth centres, schools, hospitals and prisons.

### Age groups we work with:

broadly with 10- to 25-year-olds but sometimes with younger children and young adults up to the age of 30.

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**Soft Touch Arts is a participatory arts charity based in Leicester which was founded in 1986 and runs projects and services from its youth arts centre in central Leicester.**

### ABOUT THE PROJECTS

Soft Touch's programme is focused on vulnerable young people and improving wellbeing is an aim for all of our work, which engages some 1,500 participants each year. Several projects and programmes focus more intentionally on targeting young people with mental health support needs. These include the following.

#### NoteAble

A music engagement programme for young people with extra support needs. The girls' session engages young women who typically struggle with issues such as anxiety and self-esteem. There is also a mixed session for SEN/D young people who are typically socially isolated and under-confident.

#### Unlocked

A three-year arts engagement programme targeting young adults in custody, all of whom experience a range of mental health challenges. Work has involved weekly arts sessions and annual exhibitions in Soft Touch's community gallery and Leicester's main art gallery at New Walk.

### Creative Studio

A service which receives referrals from schools and support services to provide alternative education to young people who are unable to be in the classroom. Many of these young people struggle with mental health conditions, and the one-to-one sessions which focus on their interests can offer a powerful route towards re-engagement in education.

### CAMHS

For three months in 2018, we worked with eight young people accessing CAMHS to create a permanent mural at the centre where they access therapeutic services. Participants were either looked-after children or young people who had been adopted, and all had experienced significant childhood adversity, abuse, neglect and trauma, multiple rejections and displacement from their family of origin.

Children and young people come in to us in a variety of ways: via referral or commission from schools and support services, family members or carers; as well as by word of mouth/social media or through a partnership with a specific service or institution.

We work with a range of partners on all our projects. For our Unlocked prison art project, as well as the prison governors and staff, we had partnerships with the NHS Partnership Trust; a Community Rehabilitation Company; a museum; the Police and Crime Commissioner; and community support services for young adult offenders.



Photo courtesy of Soft Touch Arts.

## OUR IMPACT

CAMHS centre staff concluded that, based on individuals' emotional responses through artistic expression, the Soft Touch CAMHS arts project was an undisputed success. In the words of the centre's community psychiatric nurse:

*“We set off on this project with the aim of giving the young people in the team a voice. And they spoke! Using the medium of art and the walls of the building as the canvas they shared important messages about their experiences. What they told us didn't always make for easy listening but we did listen.”*

*As guardians of the messages from the young people to us all, what could be more validating than giving it a place of residence in our building? In this place we will hear you. ”*

The project, the artwork and the unveiling event contributed to the centre getting an 'outstanding' rating following a CQC inspection: "They were really impressed and commented how nice it had made the building look".

The evaluation of our pilot project in HMP Leicester in 2017 showed that all young male participants had increased their sense of wellbeing over the six months; 83 per cent had higher aspirations for the future; and all had increased self-belief and confidence.

Participants said the project:

*“Made me feel better in myself, more confident.”*

*“Helps people with their mental health and shows you that there is more you can do.”*

*“Gave me an insight into my self-worth and helped with my confidence.”*

## LOOKING FORWARD...

We would like to have more robust and appropriate ways to record and report on outcomes. We would also like longer-term funding to continue with and develop successful work, including core costs, that would enable us to try things out and take risks without the pressure of ‘failing’ according to funders’ criteria.

The current situation with COVID-19 means there is even more need for mental health and wellbeing support for vulnerable young people and arts organisations need to be able to access ‘frontline’ funding (for many of our participants we are the frontline). Alongside increased need for our work, we need support to be sustainable in the face of a reduction in traded income, fundraising, and access to grants.

Hampshire Cultural Trust *ICE Project's* Art Journaling workshop with Core Art Journaling.





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## Creatively minded, young and around the world

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While we are predominantly a UK funder, our Arts & Older People Programme (2010-19) benefited hugely from interaction with creative ageing organisations in countries around the world and we hope the same will be the case for our new programme, Arts & Mental Health.

We've identified the following examples from countries outside the UK. We are sure there are many more – and we have certainly been constrained by (our) limitations of language. We would love to hear about you, so please do get in touch.

### CANADA

#### Arts Umbrella and British Columbia Children's Hospital

Arts Umbrella is a participatory arts organisation based in the cities of Vancouver and Surrey in British Columbia. It provides opportunities for young artists (from 2 to 22) to cultivate their creativity in dance, theatre, visual art and design, reaching about 24,000 young people a year. They also run donor-funded programmes in various community settings. One of these is the Creative Arts program which takes place at the youth mental health unit at British Columbia Children's Hospital where Art Umbrella artists go in regularly to work in the child psychiatric unit (for ages 5 to 11) and youth psychiatric unit (ages 12 to 19).

### AUSTRALIA

#### Heart to HeArt

Heart to HeArt was founded by artist Donna Rankin and runs a school-based visual arts programme in New South Wales. The programme runs over a term with young

people who have significant emotional and social challenges and are referred by school welfare staff.

Sessions are led by an artist and supported by a youth mental health worker and sometimes a police liaison officer who also take part in the activity alongside participants. Sessions include both a chance for young people to chat and tell their stories, and also a period of meditation, relaxation and focus exercises to encourage mindfulness, increased calm and emotional regulation. The hope is that students will take these skills away with them to help them with anxiety, stress and other challenges in their lives once the programme has ended.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Ōtautahi Creative Spaces

Ōtautahi Creative Spaces is a specialist creative wellbeing initiative in Christchurch supporting people with experience of mental distress. It was established in 2015 in response to high levels of mental distress after the Christchurch earthquake. Their aim is to create a creative community which helps people to feel more stable, more connected, more involved in their community and better able to cope with adversity.

As well as adult programmes, they run a youth project called *Unleashed!* for 15- to 25-year-olds which involves both individual and group activities exploring different themes and art forms. The project is run in partnership with the local health board and Emerge Aotearoa, an organisation which provides a wide range of services including mental health services. Young people are referred by school or health professionals and receive support from experienced youth art workers and support workers.

*Unleashed!* also provides opportunities to take part in specialist workshops and go on field trips and gallery visits.

## GERMANY

### **Unart, Essen and Kunsthaus Kannen (Münster)**

'Unart' (meaning 'bad habit') is based in the city of Essen, Germany. Since 1984, Unart has been bringing children and teenagers with mental health problems into art studios to work with professional artists to create and experiment in a range of media.

One of its recent exhibitions in 2019, "Paper Learns to Fly", was hosted by Kunsthaus Kannen in Münster. Based at the Alexianer Campus, a clinic specialising in both psychiatry and psychotherapy, the Kunsthaus has studios, a gallery and archive under one roof. The Kunsthaus stages free exhibitions throughout the year and is open to the public. The exhibitions feature both work by its studio artists and international artists within the field of Outsider Art and contemporary art with a social context. It regularly runs programmes and workshops for children and young people, including weekly workshops with studio artists and students from the local school.

## FINLAND

### **Kukunori, Culture House in School**

Kukunori has piloted a network of Culture Houses for 18- to 35-year-olds, spaces where people can come, use the space and create their own activities – many of which are arts-based (like setting up a band). There is also a virtual Culture House which started in 2017. Culture Houses are older than Kukunori, but Kukunori has developed the idea in Finland.

They are currently piloting a Culture House model for young people with partner NGO Tukiranka in the town of Pori. Tukiranka's Culture House is called Lumo and it works with young people who experience mental health challenges inside schools to prevent mental health problems and fight stigma.

Lumo is open during the school day – not just after school like most extra-curricular activities. Pupils are the curators and design their own activities according to what they want to do, with arts or music often part of it. The pilot started in early 2019 and Kukunori plan to develop the idea.

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## Some reflections

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We asked contributors to this report to tell us about the challenges they experience in their work and about how they would like to see the field of arts & mental health with children and young people develop. We have curated these here, together with a few observations that stood out to us. The Baring Foundation is a newcomer to this area so the few remarks we make are offered very tentatively. We look forward to finding out more – and about more organisations who do this vital work – in the future.

### DIVERSITY AND HYBRIDITY

A variety of different types of organisation and operating models are illustrated in this selection of case studies. This study is not comprehensive, so these observations are made with care.

Probably half of the organisations featured here can be described as participatory arts organisations. Very few specialise in mental health but generally have children and young people with mental health problems as a main beneficiary group.

There are also health and mental health charities or services who run creative programmes: 42nd Street's Horsfall Centre, Place2Be's The Art Room and Fresh Minds Education – and also possibly uniquely as far as we know, Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity, a grant-giving hospital foundation one of a few aligned to hospitals around the UK.

Another different set-up is the close partnership between Hampshire Cultural Trust, a charity which runs 23 heritage and arts venues and Hampshire CAMHS.

As noted in *Creatively Minded*, there seem to be few 'mainstream' arts organisations in this field – the City of London Sinfonia being an exception in this collection.

### SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Most contributors referred to a growing burden of mental health problems – in prevalence and severity – among children and young people, and felt that there are far more young people who would benefit from participation in arts and creativity than there are opportunities.

*“The need for services such as ours is growing and we would love to see our project, or similar projects, operate on a much larger scale to support more young people and their families.”*

**Conwy Arts Trust: Creu/Create**

*“We would like to see more young people with mental health issues being able to express themselves through the arts, for the barriers to be removed and for them to feel included and proud.”*

**42nd Street: The Horsfall Centre**

Several mentioned that there would be a mental health cost to the COVID-19 pandemic (ongoing at the time of writing) for young people and there would be more need for arts and mental health work not less.

### PARTNERSHIP WORKING

All the organisations featured in this report work with partners in different ways, including mental health services, education and youth services and youth organisations.

Partnerships are seen as vital, providing a pathway to reach young people who would benefit and in the case of mental health services offering support to artists who are working with vulnerable young people.



*WiseUp* campaign, courtesy of YoungMinds/64 Million Artists.

*“It is important to work closely with CAMHS and other partner organisations as they provide expert support if there are particular concerns regarding a young person’s wellbeing; recognising the limits of our capability in this respect is paramount.”*

**Hampshire Cultural Trust: The ICE Project**

However, most, if not all, in some way felt there needed to be greater recognition by health and education professionals, institutions and policy of the value of the arts to young people’s wellbeing and mental health.

## PART OF AN ECOLOGY OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

A couple of contributors referred to arts practitioners being on the ‘frontline’ in terms of support for children and young people’s mental health.

*“For many of our participants we are the frontline.”*

**Soft Touch Arts**

There were calls for a more structured, formalised approach to referrals and relationships with children’s mental health services to reflect the value arts providers offer and for their inclusion in a broad ecology of mental health support.

*“ We would like to see more joined-up working between mental health service providers and clearer referral routes. Having a centralised portal with an approved list of providers could be really helpful for parents desperate for some support relevant to their child’s interests. We would love for our engagement to be better valued by the NHS and healthcare sector alongside other options, such as talking therapies/counselling, so that programmes like ours can be offered to all and seen as part of a bespoke package of support tailored to each young person’s needs and interests. ”*

**Quench Arts**

*“ We would like to see the sector as a whole think more creatively about meeting the needs of children’s mental health. We are aware of the benefits in having diverse kinds of support to meet individual and collective mental health needs more inclusively. When young people’s mental health is considered, we would like arts for wellbeing to be considered as one of the activities that can be offered. ”*

**Place2Be: The Art Room**

While this report is not able to analyse where particular gaps or opportunities are, contributors made some observations. Place2Be singled out early intervention as a potential area where arts organisations could offer more, for example.

## **THE PROBLEM WITH SCHOOL (AND SCHOOLS)**

Unlike arts and mental health work with adults, education settings are obviously key partners for this work. Contributors find working with the education system presents challenges, in

particular the cuts to school budgets, which have reduced schools’ ability to spend on the arts (over many years).

There was a feeling that school itself might be part of the problem from a few respondents who would like to see arts and creativity recognised more widely for the important role they play in children’s early social and emotional development, emotional wellbeing as they grow up, and to their ability to learn.

*“ KIC believes that participation in the arts is important for the development of young minds... therefore we would like to see the arts recognised as a vital tool within the education system enhancing all other learning and wellbeing. ”*

**Kids in Control**

*“ We would like to see art sessions embedded in educational institutions as a place of play, experimentation, expression, reflection and contemplation, non-judgement and of voice. We feel this would allow young people to reduce stress and see value in themselves as unique creative individuals. We believe that creativity plays a huge part in life as it offers transferrable skills in creating something from what resources you have. ”*

**42nd Street**

Andrew Eaton-Lewis of the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival connects the decline in children and young people’s wellbeing with:

*“ the fundamentally unhealthy way we make them live their everyday lives – sending them to school too early, forcing them into a stressful regime of constant tests, and not allowing them enough time outdoors. ”*

He says:

*“This is not to suggest that art or artists can fix all this, but there is a strong case to be made that the lack of importance the arts are considered to have in children’s lives is having a damaging effect on children’s mental health.”*

## TWO WORLDS, TWO LANGUAGES

As *Creatively Minded* observed, it is necessary for arts organisations to have some understanding of the NHS, especially if seeking funding from Clinical Commissioning Groups. Many of the arts organisations featured in this report are using clinical wellbeing scales to show their impact.

However, contributors’ comments highlighted the delicate balance that many follow between demonstrating their value (to funders and mental health service partners) and championing the right of young people (and all of us) to be creative just because we want to – rather than because it will have a particular health outcome.

42nd Street felt that there can be a default falling back on clinical evidence-based approaches and “would ideally like to see access to the arts and creativity as a right, recognised for the benefits that this brings, rather than something that has to constantly be evaluated”.

They note that:

*“One of [their] most attended sessions, diverse in dynamics and participants, is an open space with no set project and no set evaluation tools – vitally and more importantly, the practitioners can observe and acknowledge the dynamics and developments taking place, but like much good art, this can be difficult to quantify and indeed doing so may stifle and suppress the impact.”*

## UNDER-RESEARCHED

Related to this, as noted in the introduction to this report and in *Creatively Minded*, while often cited as being there, the evidence base for the psychological benefits of the arts on mental health is still small and several contributors to this report wanted to see more data and more research. More academic research may also in the longer term take the pressure off arts organisations to constantly evaluate small-scale projects.

*“An evidence base is now almost universally required to validate impact, yet to gather this requires sustained intervention and at scale, which is rarely matched by adequate funds.”*

**Fresh Minds Education**

## UNDER-FUNDED AND PROJECT-FUNDED

Short-term funding and project funding were identified as particular problems. This was linked to organisational resilience, but also to the needs of young people, with whom it can take time to build relationships and who benefit from involvement over the longer term.

*“Mental health isn’t a one fix solution – young people need access to ongoing support to maintain their wellbeing and there are huge benefits in allowing sustained access to creative support beyond any initial crisis intervention.”*

**Quench Arts**

Several emphasise in their case studies the importance of having regular activities that new young people, who might be quite anxious, can join drop in and out of as they settle in.

## CO-CURATION & LIVED EXPERIENCE

Co-curation with young people was a key theme that emerged from most if not all the contributions to this report. Some organisations mentioned their intention to involve young people with lived experience of mental health problems in the running of their organisations as well, and many do so already.

## CHALLENGING WORK

As with adults, delivering arts work for children and young people with mental health problems can be difficult for artists – even posing a risk of secondary trauma, and requires skilled practitioners and support in place.

*“Sessions take place in a hospital school environment that can change from week to week as young people are admitted and discharged. The nature of the young people’s illnesses also mean that emotional and mental states can vary from session to session leading to different levels of engagement from individuals and shifting group dynamics from moment to moment.”*

**City of London Sinfonia**

City of London Sinfonia has built in preparation and debrief sessions to support musicians. Kazzum Arts highlighted a need for training and development opportunities and said they would like to see networks offering ‘supervisory’ support for staff working in the sector to support practitioner wellbeing.

## THE WHOLE FAMILY

When working with younger children in particular, practitioners can find themselves working with parents/carers as well. This reflects the reality that parents/carers are more involved in children’s lives at that stage, but is also built on practitioners’ understanding that parental mental health and family circumstances are a significant factor for children’s wellbeing.

*“Adults too need to have an opportunity to learn, change and heal alongside children for mental health outcomes to improve, for the cycles of trauma to be broken and for children and future generations to thrive and flourish.”*

**Fresh Minds Education**

Photo courtesy of Kazzum Arts, © Becky Bailey.





# Index of case studies

## Index by art form

### Visual arts

Place2Be 43

### Music and singing

City of London Sinfonia 16

Noise Solution 40

Quench Arts 46

### Theatre and film

Avant Cymru 13

Fluid Motion Theatre 26

Kids in Control 38

### Dance

Avant Cymru 13

East London Dance 24

### Multi art-form

42nd Street 8

64 Million Artists 11

Conwy Arts Trust at Venue Cymru 19

Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity 21

Fresh Minds Education 29

Hampshire Cultural Trust 32

Kazzum Arts 35

Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival 49

Soft Touch Arts 51

## Index by country

### England

42nd Street 8

64 Million Artists 11

City of London Sinfonia 16

East London Dance 24

Fluid Motion Theatre Company 26

Hampshire Cultural Trust 32

Kazzum Arts 35

Noise Solution 40

Place2Be 43

Quench Arts 46

Soft Touch Arts 51

### Northern Ireland

Fresh Minds Education 29

Kids in Control 38

### Scotland

Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity 21

Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival 49

### Wales

Avant Cymru 13

Conwy Arts Trust at Venue Cymru 19

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# Resources

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All resources can be found on our website [www.baringfoundation.org.uk](http://www.baringfoundation.org.uk)



**An initial mapping study of participatory arts and mental health activity in the UK – the first report of our Arts & Mental Health programme**

David Cutler  
2020



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