



BAY CREATE PROJECT - FINAL EVALUATION

**“WE ARE MORE SIMILAR THAN WE ARE DIFFERENT”
A CELEBRATION OF ‘WHO IS WHITLEY BAY’”**

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Executive Summary

The Bay Create project set out to explore whether bringing together an intergenerational group of people around the common theme of the local area, through exploring and creating artworks, could improve wellbeing, reduce social isolation and loneliness, promote intergenerational connectedness and understanding, and empower community members.

Community groups were brought together to share experiences and thoughts about Whitley Bay and were invited to become decision makers on the art forms and techniques they would learn and experience. There was an emphasis on building relationships and trust but also on keeping people safe during the pandemic. Both charitable organisations had to work closely, learning from each other and other relevant experts to ensure all vulnerable participants, including children and adults of all backgrounds, were well supported, that risks were managed and staff developed their own confidence to deliver the ambitious project.

Throughout the project, qualitative data was gathered from participants using recognised tools published by the Office for National Statistics. This allowed the impact of the project benefits to be effectively measured.

The Bay Create project was able to demonstrate that community groups could work and learn from each other, develop lasting connections and through the art work created build confidence in their abilities. Through participant empowerment, the connections and reduced isolation there was a significant improvement in mental health and well doing.

At a time when there is a recognised increase in levels of anxiety and depression, linked to isolation, the Bay Create project clearly demonstrates the valuable impact of enabling members of the community to take control, make decisions and learn from each other, recognising that “We are more similar than we are different”.

The project and its important findings were made possible through funding from ‘Spirit of 2012’ and the engagement of their team who guided, supported and challenged over the course of the three years, through the application, development, delivery and evaluation stages.

Sarah Sutton - Community Engagement Manager, Whitley Bay Big Local

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Introduction to the Project

Whitley Bay Big Local (WBBL) was established in 2017 as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), “To promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of the community of Whitley Bay and, in particular, those inhabitants in need of relief from financial hardship due to their social and/or economic circumstances by associating together the said inhabitants, and the statutory authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to improve facilities and service provision in the interests of social welfare, community cohesion and improving conditions and life chances for local residents”.

In 2020, in accordance with these ‘charitable objects’, WBBL worked with Barnardo’s to apply for Spirit of 2012’s Youth Advisory Panel YAP Challenge Fund. The YAP had been established to ensure that young people were part of decision-making and Barnardo’s was seen as an appropriate charity to collaborate with to apply for funding.

The funding was sought to deliver a creative project supporting local people (those under 25 and those over 60), to explore cultural themes, in celebration of Whitley Bay’s identity and shared heritage. The intention was that the project work would impact on individuals, communities, visitors to the community and on future generations. The chosen theme for the project was encapsulated in the phrase, “We are more similar than we are different’ – a celebration of ‘who is Whitley Bay’”.

We hoped to engage with, and empower, a mixed aged core group of community members to become volunteers, co-creating and leading the project. The expectation was that these leaders would ‘commission’ work with mentor artists to create 6 distinct yet linked artworks/installations/artefacts as part of a unique local trail to reflect Whitley Bay alongside intergenerational stories and themes.

These ideas had been discussed with members of the regular older age group attending WBBL activities and those attending existing Creative Civic Change project workshops and carnival clubs. Their comments regarding commitment to a longer-term initiative were notable and this contributed to the design of a project that involved different cohorts and intergenerational membership.

The partner organisation Barnardo’s ‘The Base’ consulted with young people who were excited about a project that would create a legacy in their local community. They were keen to explore themes that included LGBTQ+ attitudes, the promotion of equality, celebrating the environment and also the development of their own skills.

The grant funding allowed the support of a Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC) from WBBL, an Intergenerational Project Worker (IPW), and External Evaluator. It also provided funding for commissioning mentor artists, and project delivery necessities (including room hire, sundries, travel etc).



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The following section of the report provides a narrative and broad overview of the work undertaken as part of the Bay Create project. The first task was to appoint the Intergenerational Project Worker (IPW).

We involved managers from WBBL and Barnardo's and a team of young people in the selection process. The recruitment day was exciting as we talked about the project, how it might develop, who might get involved and how it would be inclusive and co-produced by the groups. The candidates were able to deliver a taster session to the young people. It was a unanimous decision from both managers and young representatives to appoint Helen Walton as IPW because of her kind, gentle and thorough approach, and emphasis on inclusivity .

We established links with Frank Reilly, of Strathclyde University, who advised us on co- production and co design and the processes we could use to ensure these principles were at the heart of all the work and why they were so important to this type of project.

Co-production is valued as a way of ensuring participants have influence and ownership over services, the improvement of services and improving health and wellbeing when undertaking project work.

The key principles of co production involve:

- Recognising people as assets, because “people themselves are the real wealth of society”.
- Valuing work differently, recognising that everything that people – including raising families, looking after people, maintaining healthy communities etc, constitutes work.
- Promoting reciprocity, giving and receiving – because this builds trust between people and fosters mutual respect.
- Building social networks, recognising that because people's physical and mental well-being depends on strong, enduring relationships.

As Boyle and Harris (2009) explain, real and lasting changes are possible with approaches that build or strengthen social networks and in turn motivate people to learn about and exercise their powers and their responsibilities as citizens. Networks of friends and families should also be considered positive co-contributors to success in this approach.

As Helen set about launching the project, in January 2021, she visited established groups of young people at Barnardo's "The Base" and the more age diverse groups at Whitley Bay Big Local. COVID-19 restrictions were still in place so all sessions were socially distanced and the need to protect vulnerable older members of the group meant that combined mixed age sessions were considered too high risk initially.

However, the connections between the groups were cleverly established through informal postcards, sharing the results of similar activities. Early sessions provided an exploration of how all of the participants felt about the place in which they lived and what made it special. This enabled an understanding of common views which would provide a basis for future work.

The first practical arts activities in January 2021 offered a first "hook" for the participants, and although some individuals had been initially reluctant to join the discussions, they were able and keen to open up during the activities. During these early sessions the groups established their hopes and expectations of the project.

Outreach work with "harder to reach" groups was achieved by meeting local cub, scout and guides, carers, attending Age UK group sessions and through activity coordinators in care homes, which were still largely under tight COVID-19 restrictions, through online meetings. Once the initial "explore, meet and launch" stage was completed participants were keen to start work on various art activities. Selection of the artists that participants would work with and scheduling of regular mixed age sessions began in June 2021.

The ongoing COVID-19 restrictions continued to present a challenge because the more vulnerable groups, such as care home residents, were unable to take part in person. To overcome this some activities were designed by the participants so that there could be inclusion for these most isolated community members.

Planning for the for the activities started in February and March 2021 with the first activity undertaken in May.



'Postcard Power' (May 2021) – involved creating postcards that were hand delivered to a local care home. Young participants designed and made postcards to share memories and thoughts of “the seaside” and were keen for these to be shared safely with care home residents who had been very isolated during the pandemic.

'Ceramics Workshops' (June 2021) took place at a local art studio. Participants asked to have tasters of other art forms before committing to the longer-term activities. Connections were established with North Tyneside Art Studio (NTAS) and all of the core group participants were able to visit and learn basic ceramics techniques.

'Dragons Den' (June 2021) The community groups worked to together create a brief for the type of artists that they wanted to work with. The brief included an emphasis on values with respect to participants' inclusivity. The group said that they wanted to work with artists who were:

- Patient and calm (“someone who can ‘go with the flow’ and is open to our ideas).
- Passionate and enthusiastic for the project and the local coastline
- Able to offer inspiration and encouragement in a confident but not overpowering manner
- A good listener and communicator able to work with people of all ages and abilities, including people with disabilities, dementia and mental health challenges,
- Experienced in working on community projects
- Talented in their field of creativity and able to demonstrate evidence of this
- Flexible, versatile and available throughout the first phase of the project (July – September 2021)
- Able to explain techniques in clear terms and can make the sessions inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Opportunities were advertised and applications were received. A mixed age selection panel drew up a shortlist and a “Dragons Den” type session followed where participants met the artists and using the criteria they developed voted for their preferred practitioners.

'Summer Activities' (July 2021) involved weekly mixed age sessions with opportunities for outreach into Girl Guides groups and care homes. The work was led by Jason Eason and Sofia Barton (two of the chosen artists). Jason's focus was around photography, colour and mixed media collage. Whilst Sofia helped participants develop their ideas using recycling materials to create community mandalas.

St Mary's Lighthouse (October 2021), participants visited this iconic landmark in the Whitley Bay area, that many people had been to before, but some had not. This was a mixed age outing which reinforced social connections and provided an opportunity to celebrate the beauty and heritage of the seaside town.

Nine outreach sessions took place between October and December 2021 (these included Marden Bridge Middle School and Eothen and Eastbourne care homes). These visits enabled the artists to provide a wider group of participants the opportunities to explore the various artforms. This work by Jason and Sofia culminated in an “Exhibition and Celebration” of work at Whitley Bay Library in December 2021.

(see: my.matterport.com/show/?m=AoP6iKhNciQ)





PROJECT ACTIVITIES CONTD

In 2022 two new artists were recruited to the project; Mark Crowley a woodworker and Pui Lee a visual artist. They held sessions three times a week, in the 'Big Local' building and The Base, in which they explored wood techniques, origami, mosaic and sculpture. The theme, "Taking Flight" evolved- using art to express personal growth.

'Board Games and Biscuits' (February 2022) was organised by the participants to provide an opportunity to connect participants socially with a chance to invite friends to play games, eat biscuits and connect with all of the group's members.

Outreach work into a local Marine Park First School (June 2022) involved eight Bay Create participants volunteering to work alongside the artists in sessions with six and seven year old children.

'North Tyneside Art Trail' (July-August 2022) was created with artists Mark and Pui. The work was curated to be part of a borough wide arts trail aimed at promoting the benefits of mental well-being through creative and artistic activities. As part of the trail sculpture and mosaics were displayed in the prominent WBBL Building windows on Whitley Road.

'Summer at Bay Create' (July-August 2022). Michelle Goulder, an artist who'd narrowly missed selection at both "Dragon's Den" events, was invited by the participants to run mixed age sessions throughout the summer to explore and learn crochet technique. These half day sessions were broken up with a shared lunch, funded as part of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme (secured by Barnardo's).

'Glasswork' (October - November 2022) was inspired by WBBL's adoption of the iconic K4 telephone kiosk in Whitley Bay. A visit to the dilapidated telephone box inspired the participants to want to create art to improve its appearance and reflect its seaside location. A local glass artist, Helen Grierson was engaged and visits to her studios were arranged so that Bay Create participants could explore fused glass techniques and create panels that could be displayed in the kiosk once the planned refurbishment had taken place.

Ceramics (October - November 2022). Following the successful taster sessions in 2021- participants were keen to develop their skills in clay work. Artist Michael Cunliffe at NTAS led the sessions and Jason Eason was invited back by the groups to support the end of the project, honing ideas and thoughts to create a ceramics map that represented what the project and community meant to them.

Final exhibition and Celebration (January 2023). To celebrate the conclusion of the project we hired a prestigious and iconic local venue, the St Mary's Suite at The Dome in Whitley Bay, to host an exhibition of all the completed artworks together with an afternoon tea celebration. The guest list was extensive, including participants past and present, families, friends, artists, local councillors, senior staff from Barnardo's and WBBL and local MP Sir Alan Campbell.

Participation :who attended and demographics

We believed that wide participation would be key to the success of the project. We set out to bring in members of regular groups at both Barnardo's The Base and Whitley Bay Big Locals initially but used local knowledge to reach out to other groups in the area. Linking in with arts groups, Guides and local schools enabled us to reach wider and broaden the participation. We focussed on the measurement of 'engagement', 'enablement' and 'empowerment' (the indicators set by "Spirit of 2012") as follows:

Engage ('engagement')

We counted the number of people who attended specific events and related activities. For example, people were counted if they had participated in a session that encompassed an introduction to the project and art activities or other creative expressions of themselves and their thoughts, feelings and experiences of the coast. This section also includes short series of sessions with groups such as the Guides, school art club and Young Carers.

Enable & Empower ('enablement' and 'empowerment')

We counted participants who had regularly attended sessions, as well as the planning and creative design of the project, including artist mentor, commissions and subsequent related group activities. This was the key area of sustained participation in the project and was equated to the core project group.

	Level 2: Engage Number of people involved in one-off or mass participation elements of the project		Level 3 / 4: Enable & Empower Total number of beneficiaries engaged in regular, intensive or life changing activity.		
Period	No. of NEW people reached this period	Running TOTAL no. reached to date	No. of NEW people reached this period	Running TOTAL no. reached to date	Totals
January - June 2021 Y1: Q1 / Q2 (Report 1)	102	102	23	23	125
July - December 2021 Y1: Q3 / Q4 (Report 3)	76	178	14	37	215
January - June 2022 Y2: Q1 / Q2 (Report 5)	122	300	18	55	355
July - December 2022 Y2: Q3 / Q4 (Report 7)	64	364	15	70	434
		364		70	434

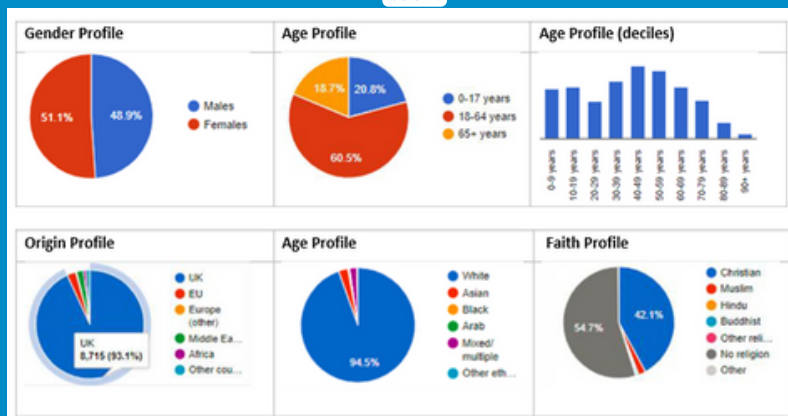
The demographic data focussing specifically on Level 3 / 4 engagement ('Enable and Empower') with respect to age, disability and ethnicity is presented below. That is, the profile of the total number of beneficiaries engaged in regular, intensive or life changing activity (n=70).

Age	Jan-June '21 (Y1: Q1/Q2)	July-Dec '21 (Y1: Q3/Q4)	Jan-June '22 (Y2: Q1/Q2)	July-Dec '22 (Y2: Q3/Q4)	Total	As a Percentage
8-14 years	4	3	5	4	16	23%
15-25 years	11	2	4	4	21	30%
26-64 years	6	8	6	6	26	37%
65+ years	2	1	3	1	7	10%
Unknown / Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	23	14	18	15	70	100%

Disability	Jan-June '21 (Y1: Q1/Q2)	July-Dec '21 (Y1: Q3/Q4)	Jan-June '22 (Y2: Q1/Q2)	July-Dec '22 (Y2: Q3/Q4)	Total	As a Percentage
Non-disabled	16	5	13	10	44	63%
Disabled	3	8	3	5	19	27%
Unknown / Prefer not to say	4	1	2	0	7	10%
Total	23	14	18	15	70	100%

Ethnicity	Jan-June '21 (Y1: Q1/Q2)	July-Dec '21 (Y1: Q3/Q4)	Jan-June '22 (Y2: Q1/Q2)	July-Dec '22 (Y2: Q3/Q4)	Total	As a Percentage
White	23	13	18	13	67	95.7%
Asian / Asian UK	0	0	0	2	2	2.8%
Mixed ethnicity	0	1	0	0	1	1.4%
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black UK	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ethnic group	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	23	14	18	15	70	100%

We believe the numbers involved in the project broadly represent the Whitley Bay community. For reference the demographic profile of Whitley Bay (population 9,364) (ONS 2021) is presented below.



We worked hard to increase levels of engagement over the course of the project, although this was not without its challenges. One difficulty was that participants might join a new activity or 'dip in' for one or two sessions and would not be familiar with the way the existing participants worked.

Despite this we did manage to engage with more members of the community over the course of the project. Details of our approach, during the periods: July 2021 – January 2022 and July 2022 – January 2023 are presented below:

Engagement: July 2021 – January 2022 (Y1: Q3 and Q4)

Engagement: Level 2: "Engage"

We reached 76 new people between July 2021 – January 2022 (Q3 and Q4)

This included work with various community groups such as Forest Hall Guides, Eothen Residential Care Home, North Tyneside Young Carers and Marden Bridge Middle School Art Club. Some of these groups received multiple art outreach sessions from our resident artists. Marden Bridge Middle School Art Club were engaged in 4 art sessions and Forest Hall Guides were engaged in 2 art sessions.

Although they attended multiple sessions, the young people involved were categorised as Level 2 participants as their engagement was on an introductory level and aimed to encourage further involvement. We were hopeful that this work could be developed further either through more outreach sessions or through engaging participants to level 3/4 in the coming year.

Engagement: Level 3 / 4: "Enable and Empower"

Those beneficiaries engaged in regular, intensive or life changing activity were considered to have Level 3 / 4 engagement ("Enable and Empower")

Between July 2021 – January 2022 (Q3 and Q4) the data concerning Level 3/4 participants was most encouraging with 28 regular participants engaged in the project over the previous two quarters. Fourteen of these participants were new for quarter 3/4 and very quickly became part of the groups, contributing in ideas, time and commitment. A further 14 participants remained involved from the beginning, demonstrating on -going interest and engagement that made a significant difference to the lives of those involved.

We had three volunteers involved in Bay Create between July 2022 – January 2023. Two of these volunteers committed over 25 hours of their time each to the project and another dedicated over 10 hours. We were very fortunate to benefit from the dedication of skilled and caring people to assist with the artwork and the social connections developing within the project. Two of our volunteers were no longer involved after Christmas 2022 due to an increase in personal work commitments increasing so we sought to gain support from other volunteers coming through the Barnardo's volunteering scheme.

Engagement: July 2022 – January 2023 (Y2: Q3 and Q4)

Engagement: Level 2: “Engage”

We reached 40 new people at a Level 2 engagement between July 2022 – January 2023 (Year 2: Q3 & 4). These participants became involved after a drive in September 2022 to promote the project and boost involvement as well as holiday and special art activities for all ages including ‘board games & biscuits’ and one-off glass/ceramics workshops. We also welcomed 24 of the participant's family and friends to the Bay Create celebration event on 22nd January 2023 where 70 people attended in total.

Events and outreach work ran again alongside the regular Bay Create participant groups which were held twice per week. We were proud and pleased to welcome 15 new regular level 3/4 Bay Create participants to the core project group during this period. In addition, there were a further 23 participants who remained regularly engaged in the project groups since the start of the year and 11 of these had been involved since the very start of the project, demonstrating on-going interest, dedication and engagement in group activity that was making a difference to the lives of those involved.

We had two regular volunteers involved in Bay Create over the final 5 months who became involved through an enrichment scheme at Whitley Bay High School 6th Form. These volunteers (16/17 years of age) attended Whitley Bay Big Local sessions and supported older members of the project - chatting, providing refreshments and offering help and encouragement with the artwork. These volunteers also became a part of the group and both made a meaningful contribution to the project.

Engagement Level 3 / 4: Enable and Empower

Overall by January 2023, 364 people had been reached at Level 2 engagement and 70 participants had participated at Level 3/4 engagement. These individuals had been regularly involved in meaningful and/or intensive activity that had impacted on their lives and on the direction of the project. Further analysis of the data and participant list revealed that 23 participants had remained involved at a significant level from the start to the end of the project (in January 2023) and 11 of those had been involved since the very start. This group were committed to steering the project and contributing to the aims – welcoming new participants and creating a warm and non-judgemental environment in which all could thrive.

These numbers are close to what we had set out to achieve – (which was 400 people at a level 2 engagement and 94 at a level 3 / 4). Despite the impact of COVID-19, Bay Create managed to draw in and retain significant numbers of people from all walks of life enabling them to connect and engage with each other.



Project Outcomes

1. Personal Wellbeing

We believed at the start of the project that the personal wellbeing of young people and older people in the community would increase through regular participation in an arts activity.

We believed that to measure any improvement we should use both quantitative data, backed up by the rich qualitative data gathered through case studies, observations and the recording of anecdotal evidence throughout the project.



Quantitative measurement of impact:

To measure quantitative improvement the four measures suggested by the Office for National Statistics (often referred to as the ONS4) were used. These capture three types of well-being: evaluative, eudemonic and affective experience. The measures ask people to evaluate how satisfied they are with their life overall, asking whether they feel they have meaning and purpose in their life, and ask about their emotions during a particular period. The ONS4 measures of personal well-being ask people to assess each of these aspects of their lives (ONS 2018). The scale was used at regular intervals during the project. Case studies, observations and collections of anecdotal evidence were also used.

Table comparing participants responses to ONS wellbeing questions at Baseline and Endline survey.

ONS wellbeing question	% of participants scoring themselves between 7-10 on the wellbeing scale. AT BASELINE	% Of participants scoring themselves between 7-10 on the wellbeing scale. AT ENDLINE
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	48%	67%
Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	53%	78%
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	47%	69%
ONS wellbeing question	% of participants scoring themselves between 0-3 on the anxiety scale AT BASELINE	% Of participants scoring themselves between 0-3 on the anxiety scale AT ENDLINE
On a scale where 0 is "not at all anxious" and 10 is "completely anxious", overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? Over 16's only	21%	45%

The data displayed in this table is based on 36 respondents who have been involved in the project in an ongoing capacity for a significant period of time and have been able to complete baseline and endline surveys.

Project Outcomes (contd.)

Qualitative measurement of impact:

Case Studies

Numerous individual comments from participants, gathered through conversation, indicated that the group activities had improved wellbeing. Some examples are presented below:

"I'm learning about myself all the time. I really like the activity – it gives me time to think about other things, more natural things" (13th October 2021).

"I'm a brave lion because before this I didn't think I was good at painting and today I did this painting and showed it to everyone, and they clapped".

This comment indicates a boost in confidence that contributed to wellbeing and the positive feelings the participant took away from the session.

One, initially reluctant, participant said that Bay Create "(kept) the doctor away" as it provided them with stimulation, creativity and companionship, impacting positively on their mental health.

This assertion was further strengthened by comments from other participants:

"When I'm really stressed out, I come here and instantly feel better – I forget about my worries" (said at one of the evaluation sessions in January 2022) And

"It (the 'Wonderful Wednesday' group) really does have an impact on wellbeing – we were laughing out loud last time"

Feedback: How are you feeling about today's session?

At the start:

"Feeling a bit unhappy as I have been suffering from an upset stomach"

"Excited to learn something new, but a little bit nervous too"

I'm excited but unsure of what were doing"

At the end:

"Really enjoyed being creative with nice people"

"Brilliant session – Michael was excellent explaining all about what we were doing"

"Had a mint time, would do it again"

Getting the balance right between developing work that would positively impact on wellbeing whilst also encouraging people to do something that pushed them outside of their 'comfort zone' was an ongoing challenge, across the age ranges. Many older participants were happy to keep the activities simple: e.g. colouring in, as they felt that they were being creative but could concentrate on the chat and social side of the get together. However, it was the more challenging activities that led to a boost in the confidence of participants.

Every week at the groups, there were examples of improvements in personal wellbeing. For one participant who attended regularly since the start of the project (and was alternatively able to other members of the group), this impact was often demonstrated in their visible reaction and demeanour. For example, with Mark Crowley, the groups had learnt to use the wood burning tool. This participant had been very nervous, previously refusing to use the tool, preferring to ask others to do it for them. They were warmly encouraged to try it themselves and given additional time to talk through the safety equipment and have an additional demonstration. The artist also pencilled an outline to follow and helped steady the participant's hand. These additional measures to reassure the participant enabled them to complete the task independently. They were so pleased and proud of their achievements, they smiled and shouted, "I did it"! Before calling everyone over to look at their achievement, saying, "Oh, I'm really pleased with myself – look what I've done – tell Sarah".



Our learning from the project with regard to 'Wellbeing'

We learned that what could seem like small unexpected incidents during the actual project, for example, connections or small acts of kindness between the participants meant a lot to individuals in terms of their own wellbeing. For example, being given a birthday card or someone praising their work. It was the non-judgemental and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged people to keep coming back and remain involved over a longer period regardless of the life experiences they were facing.

The qualitative scores do show a significant increase in wellbeing of the regular participants. Through observing the project over time of this was evident through the queues at the door for people to come into sessions and the excitement around the different elements of the artistic activities. Seeing the group's jubilant return from their bus trip to the glass artist's studio was a real indication of the joy and confidence that was being instilled in the community members.

Project Outcomes (contd)

2 Loneliness

We believed at the start of the project that participants' loneliness would decrease through regular participation in an arts activity.

As before we used both quantitative data, backed up by qualitative material data gathered through case studies, observations and the recording of anecdotal material.

Quantitative measurement of impact:

To measure quantitative improvement with regard to loneliness, the relevant question from the Office for National Statistics (ONS4) was used together with case studies, observations and collections of anecdotal evidence.

Table comparing participants responses to ONS 'loneliness' question at Baseline and Endline survey.

ONS wellbeing question	% of participants responding 'Often/Always' to the question 'How often do you feel lonely?' AT BASELINE	% of participants responding 'Often/Always' to the question 'How often do you feel lonely?' AT ENDLINE
Q1: How often do you feel lonely?	13	2

Qualitative measurement of impact: Case Studies

There were many opportunities to see and hear how Bay Create was making a difference to those who were isolated.

When asked what Bay Create meant to them, one participant answered:
"it's friendly, fun and people have gelled well" (25th November 2023)

For many participants, Bay Create offered a regular and reliable opportunity to meet with others and share an interest. Another participant expressed their thoughts about the impact on loneliness throughout their involvement. In a telephone call midway through the project, they said:

"I feel better, getting out, seeing people and talking to people – getting out and being part of a group and feeling like you matter, and that people want to hear what you have to say. At home, you can feel different and stay in bed all day – it's good to get out when you can". (January 2022).

Another participant shared their thoughts on the sessions and the impact:

"What Whitley Bay needs is places like these, where people of all ages can come and mix. Its people who can't get out and are stuck in, they can come out and see people and join in with different activities. Here at the moment, we have all different people and ages and everyone is joining in as a group, it's like therapy – everyone has their strengths and weaknesses but that doesn't matter here. Everyone has problems but at least they can come and enjoy themselves. Places like this is how lonely people make new friends" (23rd November 2023).

Another regular participant said:

"Bay Create was a godsend to me as I moved to the area not knowing anyone. The group is so friendly and welcoming. Helen was a fab leader, encouraging everyone. I will miss this group." (January 2023)



COVID-19 and the associated restrictions made some connections difficult. Bay Create was fortunate that the spaces available for the sessions were large and this meant that social distancing was possible. Outreach sessions were able to take place with some groups in care homes and within carers groups and Girl Guides but these connections were finite rather than ongoing as the maintenance of these connections was sometimes unmanageable given the scale of the project.

Our learning from the project with regard to 'Loneliness'

Providing a welcoming and safe space for people to get together regularly for activities reduced social isolation. The opportunities to try new arts activities, work with artists and produce artworks were an incentive to break from the lonely routines that some had found themselves in:

"Yeah - loneliness, it's nice to come and see friendly happy people and smiles. And my depression - if you have depression this place is like a turntable - if you're having a bad day you can go one way or another...if you come here it gives you a task to go on - its why I come here. Instead of chucking yourself off a bridge or hurting yourself, you come here and it takes your mind somewhere else and you can express yourself. I can't read or write, that's why I do my art, it's my outlet - my way of expressing myself"

These two participants were new to the area- had never met or taken part in any activities through Whitley Bay Big Local before.

They have continued to attend the community centre since the conclusion of the Bay Create project.

The data shows the decrease in social isolation and is supported by the stories told by the participants. Observations showed that people were genuinely feeling a sense of connection- there was anticipation for each weekly session. As some sessions could become quite noisy we tried to rearrange the seating to allow for smaller groups but the participants wanted to sit together so that they could ALL connect during the activities.





Project Outcomes (contd)

3. Intergenerational Connectedness

We believed at the start of the project that different generations that participated would be more connected.

As there is no ONS indicator for this theme we relied on qualitative data to determine impact (including observations, anecdotes and case studies).

Qualitative measurement of impact:

Where joined up groups and activities occurred during the project, there were many examples of positive, meaningful, and constructive intergenerational connections. It highlighted the importance of connection between people closer in age, but at different stages in life, as they were able to share life experiences and facilitate mutual learning.

Case Study:

'J' was a participant in the 80+ age range with additional learning needs, they attended Bay Create from Spring 2022. 'J' lives in a local care home and was assisted to attend the group by an unpaid carer/friend who brought them to activities. During COVID-19, 'J' was unable to go out into the community and frequently communicated how much they missed being out and about.

As soon as a 'J' started attending the group, they were encouraged to participate by other group members who sat with them and assisted them to colour in and become involved in art activities. 'J' felt comfortable to chat about how they were feeling and confided in group members about their boredom in the care home and their desire to go out and do "fun things". One regular participant of the group was so moved by these feelings of loneliness and boredom that they rang the care home and arranged to meet up and take 'J' out for a trip. This subsequently developed into the two participants planning trips out together on a regular basis for ice-cream and walks by the beach. It shows the care and compassion that group members had for each other's wellbeing.

Project Outcomes (contd)

'J' also developed bonds with one of the young volunteers from Whitley Bay High School who made a particular effort to focus on supporting them over a number of weeks. It took time for 'J' to feel confident with them, but they have grown closer and 'J' regularly asks for help when they need it. 'J' enjoyed the companionship of the group and chose to colour rather than join in with whatever activity was taking place. 'J' was looked after and supported by various members of the group who were attentive and made sure that they were comfortable and felt included. For example, people would move seats and tables to ensure 'J' could sit next to someone they knew. Other members would escort 'J' to the toilet, help with their walker or assist 'J' into a taxi at the end of a session. It was a real credit to the nature of the people in the group that they cared and wanted to help to make the group a good experience for this particular participant.

'J's' feedback at the final evaluation confirmed our observations:

"I love to be with people and I enjoy sitting colouring in – it's a wonderful place to be, nice and friendly".

'J' also demonstrated their feelings at various moments in the project – such as singing a song to show their happiness at receiving a birthday cake and doing a dance when they were awarded a crochet certificate. 'J' also performed a tap dance at the Christmas party and was beaming when they received their certificate and photobook at the End Celebration event.

Challenges

Intergenerational work presents its own type of challenges with the increased vigilance and awareness needed around safeguarding. Although Barnardo's and WBBL shared very similar philosophies and ways of working, the processes were very different in gathering contact details and data from participants. Core project staff team met with Barnardo's Safeguarding experts to explore and discover a route through the issues that were presenting. Rigorous safeguarding policies were in place and so the risks were considered to be low.

Throughout the project the aim was to bring younger and older participants together. Mixed age sessions were planned and well attended though age groups did tend to "flock together". Mixed events could seem challenging when people stayed in their separate 'same age groupings' and seemed reluctant or shy in communicating with each other. Despite this the feedback from the events was consistently positive and participants commented that it was good to be in the same activity/event as other age groups regardless of whether they actually interacted with each other. For example, one participant explained that it was nice just being together and seeing each other's achievements, which made for a comfortable atmosphere.

Gender and Identity

The exploration of gender and identity was a theme throughout the project and a positive outcome arising from the connections between different generations. As the different age groups came together at the start, young people said they wanted older generations to understand them more and be more inclusive. Some of the younger participants aged 25 and under were part of the LGBTQ+ community and expressed that they found it hard to fit into the local community.

These young people requested that pronouns were used in introductions in the mixed age groups. The groups were prepared for this through participation in discussions about 'what a pronoun is' and what it meant to express them. This was a completely new concept for many of the participants and initially, humour was used to diffuse feelings of uncertainty. However, one of the participants in the older age group was a person exploring their own identity and this helped the group to understand how such issues impacted on individuals. From the discussions all groups started to regularly introduce themselves with pronouns and it became the norm in the project.

One participant aged 65+ said:

"I like the way group members come together informally including everyone, using pronouns to introduce each other. It has made me want to learn more and try to understand the differences between people in a positive way".

The impact on one young person was evident in the fact that they used a mixed age group outing to introduce themselves as their new name and gender for the first time – indicating a level of confidence and comfort in the positive response they would receive.

The group's exploration of gender identity has also had a lasting impact - leading to many conversations over the months. One participant confided that they were worried they had offended a trans gender friend by mis-gendering them. This provided an opportunity to discuss and reassure the group around how to treat people identifying as trans gender.

Towards the end of the project a mixed age group met at half term. A round of introductions included pronouns and one of the newer members laughed as they had never used their pronouns to introduce themselves before. A group member aged 65+ explained why we use them, stating:

"We have people who identify as transgender so we make sure we're calling them the right thing so they feel welcome – there are people who it is important for".

Another group member aged 25-64 years added that

"There are people in the community who are transgender and might see themselves as a different gender to what we realise so it is important to use pronouns so everyone is using the right words".



One participant said:

"The children (young participants) were funny. I enjoyed going and chatting. I underestimated how many ideas and inputs the children would have – they were brilliant. I never really knew how to interact with little children – only my own so I didn't know how to talk – I was really nervous at first, but Pui was brilliant and gave me tasks to let me know what to do, I got instructions beforehand and that really helped. The kids were great" ('L', participant aged 26-64 yrs.).

By focusing on the wider intergenerational gaps, it was easy to overlook the importance of the connections between and within closer age ranges.

"I was really proud of making the model in 2 hours with the 7 year olds because it looked really good. I felt pride in myself for helping them and pride in them for doing it" ('A' aged 12 years)

Project Outcomes (contd)


4. Participant Empowerment

We believed at the start of the project that participants would feel empowered to make decisions, shape this project, and positively influence their local environment.

We used quantitative and qualitative data (including observations, anecdotes and case studies) to determine impact.

Throughout the project the participants were encouraged to express themselves verbally and through their art. Decisions on how the project would develop were presented to the participants in ways that gave them control and ownership. From the outset in group sessions, values, hopes and plans were discussed. This ranged from exploring "why we are doing art?" to the actual setting of the briefs for the selection of the resident artists and showed participants that they were able to own and indeed succeed in shaping the project.

The Bay Create Artist's Brief



Bay Create Artist's brief.

Who are we?

We are a group of people of all ages and abilities with a shared love of our beautiful North-East coast. We are co-creating the BayCreate project in partnership with Whitley Bay Big local and Barnardos The BASE young people's centre. Bay Create aims to make connections and build friendships across generations by sharing our stories and experiences of the North East coast and finding commonalities between different age groups. We want to work together as a community to transform our stories and experiences into artwork. We hope to improve people's wellbeing and reduce isolation and loneliness through our project. To find out more about the BayCreate project please go to the Whitley Bay Big Local website: <https://www.whitleybaybiglocal.org/bay-create>

What do our artists need to deliver?

Story-sharing role:

To work with the BayCreate core project groups, giving consideration to the themes that are important to us, to guide and support us to share memories, experiences, thoughts and feelings about the local coastline.

Facilitate regular story-sharing sessions with community and youth groups and care homes across North Tyneside during July, August and September 2021 - supported by the BayCreate core group, project worker and volunteers.

Record and collate the stories and experiences shared by the groups e.g., through poetry, music, prose, digital art or in partnership with the community artist (see below).

Community artist role:

Support us to create one or two art installations inspired by our stories. Work with the BayCreate core project groups, giving consideration to the themes that are important to us, to guide and support us to create artwork that represents our thoughts and feelings about the coast.

Facilitate regular art workshops with community and youth groups and care homes across North Tyneside during July, August and September 2021 - supported by the BayCreate core group, project worker and volunteers.

Work with us to decide what type of art we can explore – we are interested in mosaic, murals, street art, clay, ceramics, paint, glasswork and sculpture. We would like to use recycled and natural materials in the artwork.

The skills, qualities and experience we are looking for:

Patience and calm. We want someone who can go with the flow and is open to our ideas.

Passion and enthusiasm for the project and the local coastline.

Someone to inspire and encourage us in a confident but not overpowering manner.

A good listener and communicator who can work with people of all ages and abilities including people with disabilities, Dementia and challenges with mental health.

Experience of working on community projects.

An artist talented in their field of creativity and able to demonstrate evidence of this.

Someone who is flexible, versatile and available throughout the first phase of our project in July, August and September 2021.

Someone who can explain techniques in clear terms and make the sessions inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Throughout the project the voices of the participants were always heard and responded to. Examples of the community having their voice heard was evident in the response to requests for sessions that reflected their outside interests and concerns. For example, sessions were spent creating art to show support for Ukraine, and designing jubilee plates that were decorated for another organisation's Tea Dance.

The co-creational ethos of Bay Create lent itself well to providing opportunities for all participants to shape the project from beginning to end. Participants made decisions about which artists that were employed, the themes that were important to them and the type of artworks they wanted to create. They also decided what activities should be done together, who should be engaged with in the community and the artwork should be celebrated and displayed.

In the final questionnaire that participants completed an additional question was included:

'Do you feel better about your life and future as a result of being part of Bay Create? Of the 21 responses, 17 answered "Yes", 4 were "unsure" but no respondents said "No".

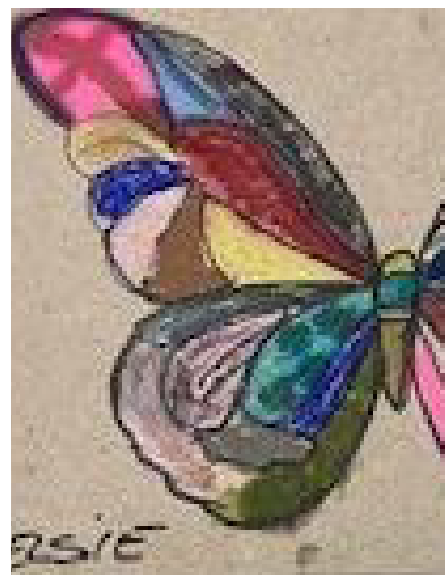
Case studies:

The case studies below provide further testimony of the impact that the co-creative nature of Bay Create had in empowering its participants.

Case Study 'D' - aged 15-25 years, typically abled, White British, Male

When 'D' joined the project, he knew two of the members and was one of the older participants in the group at 'The Base'. He has often found himself in the position of 'leading' some of the group and trying to inspire others in activities. He cited the example of when Pui (an artist) was helping someone with a specific part of an activity or showing a small group what to do, he would often take on the role of guiding others who might need help or encouragement. 'D' appreciated the way Pui and Mark engaged the members in shaping the project, encouraging the group to reflect on their individual and shared ideas, and to choose different art mediums and materials. 'D' was involved throughout the recruitment process for the artists alongside other group members and appreciated the way the young people were able to influence the direction of the project. Perhaps even more so than the older members who he tended to think are more likely to 'go with the flow'.

Through his involvement with the project 'D' said he felt his "confidence had gone through the roof", mainly due to having the Bay Create space and the opportunities to work together creatively with a great group of young people, developing different perspectives on things and seeing himself and others growing together in their levels of maturity.



Project Outcomes (contd)

Case Study 'S-J' - aged 26-64 years

'S-J' attended the project for over a year and regularly offered support to others within the group around their own artwork. 'SJ' used to run a jewellery making company but was unable to keep the business going and is currently not working. The BASE was given a large number of jewellery making items and the groups had been experimenting with it all without much guidance. 'S-J' offered to sort out all the jewellery making equipment and create kits that could be used to teach skills to the groups at Whitley Bay Big Local and The BASE. They then offered to run small sessions with the groups to teach them to make a bracelet and earrings. These sessions were very successful with positive feedback including: "S-J was fantastic, so organised and gave individual 1-2-1 help - they have the right temperament to show older and slower people skills in making pretty things. S-J was the best and most patient I've ever known - brilliant at talking us through the techniques". In response S-J stated "Oh wow, that's so lovely to hear. I'm so happy that people are getting enjoyment out of my little sessions. It's been loads of fun doing it again - thank you!"

Challenges

Putting the participants in the lead did slow processes down. True co-production where the participants really influence the direction of the project led to timings altering and deviations from original plans, even of those devised by the co-designers. For example, the participants had interviewed Michelle, a crochet artist, twice and really wanted to work with her, but they felt that her art form would not fill a full three-month residency, so they invited her to run a summer series of four weeks.

We recognised that building relationships and confidence would take time, and in the early stages of each part of the project participants' this was clearly the case. Building good relationships with the artists also took a little longer than anyone anticipated.

Our learning from the project with regard to 'Empowerment'

For similar projects in the future, it would be useful to have a little more structure around the residencies- and more time built in for the early part of each of the artists' time to build relationships with participants.



Reflections and Recommendations

At the final evaluation event in January 2023 a visual minute taker was invited to record the highlights of the final exhibition and celebrations event. Tim 'the minute taker' captured the essence of Bay Create in the space of a couple of hours with the participants.



It was exciting to be able to use one of the final arts activities for people to encapsulate their thoughts and feelings of the project. Hope, friendship, community, friendship and support were all cited as key features of the project as a whole.

We feel it is important not to focus solely on the final artworks as it was the journey that clearly meant more to the participants involved. People also came to their groups with their own personal challenges weighing on their minds and support should be prioritised over productivity. Person Centred work was at the heart of the whole project.

Although the original plan was to produce a 'Bay Create Arts Trail', comprising the works of participants, the participants wanted to celebrate their creations together to recognise their output, so local venues were sought for two exhibitions. The first of these was at Whitley Bay Library in December 2021, the second was at renowned local iconic landmark, The Dome, in January 2023. The participants' work was also incorporated into the North Tyneside Arts Trail in July - August 2022.

It is envisaged that the artworks produced as part of the project will be incorporated into building refurbishments that are currently taking place at Bernardo's and Whitley Bay Big Local.

As well as the creative output throughout the project the group participants learned about each other, from each other, about how they are different and how they are so similar.

- Reach out wide and don't be afraid to take well managed risks in the groups of people you bring together.
 - Make the journey and the support you offer the focus rather than the final product.
- Use the art to allow the participants to tell their story and how they are feeling about the project.
- Observe and listen to your participants- they will lead the project the way it needs to go.
 - Find the balance between helping people feel comfortable and urging them out of their comfort zones to really grow.

Legacy

The established groups did not want the opportunities to get together to be creative to end.

The Thursday young Bay Create session has continued and is now called 'Create at The Base'. With the current focus on music they have a musician working with them as part of North Tyneside Music Education Hub. Normally 8-10 young people (10-17 year olds) attend. Although initially a ten-session offer; Barnardo's recently learned that they have been offered a further term of music-based sessions.

Arian, the music consultant, co-produces the session ideas and plans with the young people who then work with him to co-produce pieces of music. The young people are writing lyrics and melodies, playing, using digital music apps, recording and performing their pieces, and are developing a range of new skills, gaining confidence, building up memories from the experiences, making friendships and social connections and most importantly having a lot of fun.

'Wonderful Wednesday' art sessions at WBBL have also continued where participants have chosen to look at mandalas, 'zen doodling' and collage again- building on skills and experiences they first had with the artists as part of Bay Create. The social side of the activity remains every bit as important as the art and as the weeks go on, members are taking opportunities to lead the sessions themselves. They are using their new skills to celebrate The Coronation and to join in Whitley Bay Carnival.



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