



Kreative Kinship on Prescription



Project Evaluation
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Section 1: Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This report seeks to capture the key learning in relation to the Kreative Kinship on Prescription project, gained from the various methods of data collection including:

- Participant before and after questionnaires.
- Artist and volunteer reflective diaries.
- MSC Panel stories and discussions.

It also includes:

- A summary of the project, including the aims.
- A summary of the most significant themes and key learning that has emerged across the project.
- A brief overview of the evaluation tools used.

1.2 Project description

Kreative Kinship on Prescription is an arts and health project seeking to explore how creative friendships can help alleviate loneliness and isolation and improve mental health and wellbeing for older people. Participants are matched with a skilled artist and volunteer who use creative activities in the participants' home or care home to build confidence and wellbeing. In time, participants are encouraged to build new friendships and enjoy further creative activities at People Speak Up's Ffwrnes Fach centre.

1.3 Evaluation approaches

The Kreative Kinship on Prescription project used three main evaluation methods aimed at maximizing learning, improving practice and outcomes, and providing evidence for funders and other stakeholders. These were:

- Participant questionnaires collected at various points during the project.
- Artist reflective diaries.
- Most Significant Change (MSC) – a qualitative approach that collects and uses participant stories of change for group reflection and learning.

1.4 Key findings from participant questionnaires

Participant responses to questionnaires were collected before, during and at the end of the project.

Participants reported the following from their engagement with the project:

- The process of engaging in a creative activity with the support of an artist and volunteer leads to positive impacts, building skills and confidence, reducing loneliness and promoting mental health. The creative process opens up the space to explore and process difficult emotions and memories in a safe and supported space.

- The relationship between the artist and the participant is crucial. The artist plays a role in supporting the participant to build skills and confidence by providing positive, valued feedback. Sharing their own stories enables a deeper connection with the participant.
- Some participants are taking what they've learnt and gained through the project and are finding ways to share this with other people beyond the project, 'paying it forward'.

1.5 Key findings from artist/volunteer reflective diaries

Artists and volunteers completed reflective diaries after each session. Key findings and insights are summarised as follows:

- Physical and mental wellbeing improvements for participants were delivered through a crucial combination of relationships and creative practice. Relationships were characterised by openness, honesty and often some vulnerability. This allowed for a flexible and adaptive approach to the provision of creative activities.
- Nevertheless, development of confidence and full engagement with the creative activities took time and developed within, between and across sessions.
- Engagement in the participant's home brought a number of benefits, including:
 - Allowing insights into the person's life, with the possibility of referring for additional support where necessary.
 - The development of deeper and more meaningful relationships.
 - A person centred approach that is not linked to an organisational location or building, allowing engagement to continue in other venues where necessary.

1.6 Key findings and themes from the Most Significant Change panel discussions

'Most Significant Change' stories were collected from 8 people involved in the project (including participants, artists, volunteers and staff). A panel of 8 people was convened to read and reflect on the key themes and learning within these stories.

The panel's reflections led to the following key insights:

- Participants, artists and volunteers described their own journeys within the project, characterised by increases in confidence, purpose, mental wellbeing and physical health.
- These changes were a product of both the kinship relationships developed through the project and the carefully tailored creative activities these relationships allowed.
- These relationships were characterised by respect and mutual trust and involved the artist and volunteer in facilitative/accompanying type roles rather than traditional 'teacher' roles.
- Holding sessions in participant homes meant that artists and volunteers were in the privileged position of 'bearing witness' to a person's life and memories and of enabling them to share these through creative activities.
- Panel members were concerned about the potential damage caused by the end of the project and were deeply committed to its continuation.
- The group were pleased to be collecting participant stories but concerned that it may still be difficult to share more negative emotions, stories or feedback. They are keen to build on this process in future to capture 'golden nuggets' across the organisation's work and to create ongoing opportunities for reflection, challenge and learning.

1.7 Key findings and recommendations from the project

The key role of relationships

The relationships between participant, volunteer and artist are central for a number of reasons. It is recommended that artists and volunteers are gathered at the beginning of future projects to establish relationships and that ongoing opportunities for reflection on developing relationships is provided for the small kinship communities of participant, artist and volunteer.

The role of creative processes and activities.

The creative process itself, alongside the relationships, is the basis for much of the positive outcomes related to mental health and wellbeing. It is recommended that new evaluation methods are explored that make use of the creative 'products' from the project (e.g. paintings, poems and photographs).

The significance of meeting in participants' homes

Home based sessions allow a person centred approach not limited by connections to a building (meaning that relationships continue if people can no longer attend the centre or move to a care home). They promote a different and more fruitful type of relationship with the artist and volunteer and they allow additional insights into lived experience. Staff and volunteers should be trained and supported to respond appropriately to some of the issues that arise as a result.

The impact of loneliness and isolation

The project was found to have significantly reduced loneliness and isolation for participants. Relationships have continued beyond the end of the project. It is recommended that longitudinal evaluation methods (including MSC story collection) are used to explore whether this impact is sustained over time.

The 'pay it forward' factor

A number of participants and volunteers described how they have made use of new-found skills and confidence to benefit others through contributing positively in other groups, setting up new groups, developing new project ideas or volunteering in other projects. Participants could be encouraged to consciously explore their strengths, skills and knowledge and to consider how they might like to 'pay it forward' as they progress through the project.

The long term nature of change

The formation of meaningful relationships and the creation of real change takes time. People Speak Up should continue to make the case for long term, sustainable funding with partners and funders.

The role of evaluation and learning

There was enthusiasm expressed for the process of Most Significant Change (MSC) but also some concern that it might not always provide access to more difficult, challenging or negative stories and experiences. Additional approaches should be explored that might correct this imbalance, continuing important opportunities to learn from project development and delivery.

Section 2: Project description and aims

2.1 An introduction to People Speak Up

People Speak Up is an arts and health charity based in Llanelli, established in 2017 and delivering work across the Hywel Dda and Swansea region. People Speak Up (PSU) creates a time and space for individuals and communities to find their voice, especially those who are marginalised, live in poverty and who have protected characteristics.

PSU connects communities through storytelling, spoken word, creative writing, and participatory arts. They offer workshops, training, events, volunteering and conversations.

Their aim is to connect people and to create healthier, cohesive, resilient communities through artistic exploration by:

- Stimulating, engaging, and creating cohesive communities
- Building confidence
- Cultivating intergenerational understanding
- Promoting health and wellbeing through creative practice
- Generating workshops, performances and opportunities for individuals and communities
- Tackling loneliness and isolation
- Measuring social impact in the local and wider community
- Investigating the gaps in provision within current arts and wellbeing practices in the UK and nationally
- Providing volunteering opportunities for future employment

Connecting people, making healthier, cohesive, resilient communities.

Problems
 Mental Illness
 Social Isolation
 Strain on NHS services



Referrals

Young People
 Adults
 Health related trauma
 Long term mental illness
Older People
 Social isolation
 Dementia

Young People Speak Up

Birth Cafe
 Cancer Cafe

One to one Stories

Story Care + Share
 Intergenerational Projects
 Speak Up Pod
 Care Home Activities



Assumptions

Continued referrals from health, social care and third sector partners.
 Continued engagement on courses; Continued commissions from partners.
 Outcomes are measured consistently and are user friendly -with accessible language

Evidence

Case studies

Volunteers

Ambassadors

Participant-led events
 and gatherings



Long term outcomes

Alleviate strain on NHS

Active engagement

Dynamic, cohesive communities

Reports and
 Outcomes disseminate

Short term outcomes

Improved mental health
 and wellbeing

Alleviated loneliness

Empowerment

Sense of identity

Connection

2.2 The Kreative Kinship on Prescription Project

Kreative kinship on Prescription is an arts and health project seeking to explore how creative friendships can help to alleviate loneliness and isolation and improve mental health and well-being for older people living in Carmarthenshire.

Primary participants were older people received through referral who were each matched with an artist and volunteer. Initial activity took place in the participant's home, with the artist and volunteer supporting the individual to engage in creative activities including: poetry, creative writing, song writing, ceramics and visual arts. Later stages of the project saw participants invited to continue engaging in creative activity at People Speak Up's Ffwrnes Fach centre in Llanelli. Volunteers continued their connection with the participant and the artists were available to check in and support throughout the process. A second strand of the project saw artists and volunteers engaging with participants in care homes, using the same approach.

Towards the end of the project a celebration and exhibition of participants' creative work was held at Ffwrnes Fach.

2.3 Project partners

The following independent artists worked on the project, delivering sessions with project volunteers:

- Ceri John-Philips
- Duke Al Durham
- Bill Taylor-Beales
- Rufus Mufasa

In addition, Hywel Dda Health Board helped by brokering relationships with GPs and with learning and research. The following organisational partners referred individuals to the project:

- Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS)
- British Red Cross
- Age Cymru Dyfed
- Carers Trust

Creative sessions took place at the following care homes:

- The Hollies
- Ty Waunarlwydd
- Cilymaenllwyd
- Burry Port Friendship Group

2.4 Project Outputs, Outcomes and Questions

The Kreative Kinship on Prescription project sought the following key outputs:

- To recruit and work with **6** volunteers who support artists in delivering sessions.

- To deliver artist led and volunteer supported sessions with **20** lonely and isolated individuals in their homes.
- To deliver artist led and volunteer supported sessions with **40** residents in **4** care homes in Carmarthenshire and Llanelli.

The project committed to a number of outcomes that were directly related to different groups of participants as follows:

Participant group	Desired outcomes
Older people who are lonely and isolated	To alleviate loneliness and isolation To improve mental health and well-being
Older people living in care homes	To alleviate loneliness and isolation To improve mental health and well-being
People with caring responsibilities for participants	To improve mental health and well-being
Volunteers	To improve mental health and well-being

In addition, the following key questions were identified at the start of the project:

- 1) In what ways does an ongoing 'friendship' with a creative community (the artists, volunteers and PSU as an organisation) impact participants' sense of connection to themselves and others?
- 2) In what ways does the role of the 'friendship volunteer' or 'befriender' impact on the wellbeing of the volunteers?
- 3) In what ways does receiving ongoing wellbeing coaching support freelance artists to feel more connected?
- 4) Impact: How does a sense of connectedness, through friendship and professional support, influence what happens next? eg How does this support impact the artists' professional practice and personal wellbeing? In what ways might the older participants engage in their community?

Section 3: Evaluation methodology

3.1 Purpose of evaluation

The Kreative Kinship Project used three key methods to evaluate success against the outcomes identified at the beginning of the project. The purpose of the project evaluation was:

- To create opportunities for reflective learning based on practice and experience, enabling lessons to be learnt and improvements to be made 'on the ground' during the delivery phase.
- To provide evidence of impact against the project outcomes to funders and other stakeholders.
- To identify key themes and learning to enable the effective planning and design of future iterations of the project.

3.2 Evaluation methods

The following evaluation approaches were used:

Participant questionnaires

Project Co-ordinator Carys Phillips contacted each participant for a check in and conversation three times throughout the project: after the first session, after the third session and at the end of the project following the celebration and exhibition. She used the following questions to explore the participants' progress against key project outcomes:

- How did you feel before the visit?
- What was your favourite part of the visit?
- How were you feeling after the visit?

At the end of the project participants were asked:

- If the project were to continue, would you be a part of it?
- Any highlights/lowlights?
- Any other comments.

Artist/volunteer reflective diaries

Project artists and volunteers were required to complete a reflective diary pro-forma after each session with a participant. In doing so they provided a response to the following questions:

- What did you observe? (incl. body language, engagement levels, changes in mood).
- Any comments from the participant?
- What, if any, relationships were formed?
- Any other comments.

At the end of the project artists were also asked the following questions:

- How could PSU improve the project?
- A highlight?

- A lowlight?
- Anything else?

Most Significant Change (MSC)

MSC is a qualitative, story based method of evaluation that seeks to understand the impact made by the project from the perspective of participants, staff and volunteers. It provides opportunities for participants, staff, volunteers and partners to reflect on these 'stories of change' in order to gain as much learning as possible from experiences of the project. The process included the following stages:

- PSU staff were introduced to MSC and briefed in the process of story collection.
- Staff arranged meetings with, and collected stories from, 8 project participants. These included: 3 participants, 2 volunteers, 2 artists and one PSU member of staff. Prompt questions were used including the following:
 - Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and what life was like before you got involved in the Kreative Kinship project?
 - How did you get involved in the project? What did you hope might happen as a result of getting involved?
 - As a result of participating in the project what do you think has been the most significant change for you personally?
 - What caused this change?
 - If you were to tell other people about People Speak Up, what would you say?
 - What title would you give your story?
- As far as possible, story-tellers were encouraged to speak freely, with story-collectors using prompts when necessary. Consent to use the story was discussed and obtained. One participant story-teller asked for their story to be anonymised.
- Stories were transcribed and edited by the team and the evaluation consultant.
- A panel of 8 people (consisting of project participants, staff, volunteers, artists and partners) was convened to read and reflect on the stories of change. The group met for three hours on 4th September. Each story was read in turn, with 15 minutes after each reading for two groups of four panel members to reflect on, and discuss, the story using the following prompt questions:
 - What have you learnt? – What insights has the story given you into how the project has impacted on the storyteller and / or on their community?
 - What did you feel? – What were your emotions during and after reading the story?
 - What, if any, insights has this person's story provided in order to help inform current or future project activities?
- The two groups of panel members were asked to select one story each which was considered to be the 'most significant' in terms of impact and learning for the organisation. These were presented to the wider group. In the end, three stories were selected and agreed as the most significant.
- The panel discussions were recorded and transcribed by a PSU member of staff.

Please note, when using quotes from participant questionnaires and artist/volunteer reflective diaries, names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

Section 4: Participant and session numbers

The project delivered the following outputs across the duration of the project:

- **5** artists and **6** volunteers worked together to deliver sessions on the project
- **70** home visits were made with **20** individual isolated and lonely adults
- **20** sessions were run at care homes with a total of **66** participants
- In total, **86** participants benefited from the project



Section 5: Key findings from the participant questionnaires

An analysis of the participant questionnaires has identified the following key themes and learning:

5.1 Creativity and skills

Participants valued the informal, friendly nature of the sessions.

'I liked the informality of the 4 meetings. It was a good combination.'

They described a sense of achievement after the sessions, in particular in relation to the creative process. This led to positive feelings of wellbeing as well as motivation for further creative activity.

'I felt like I achieved something after being low for so long, I felt very uplifted.'

'I was on cloud 9 and still bouncing from the visit - I'm determined to get some work done and create for when they visit next.'

'They have left me with my spirits lifted!'

Positive feedback from the artist and associated pride in their creative work was an important factor in increased confidence and wellbeing.

'Being shown what I done, I was pleased by myself and Duke and Stephanie's reaction - I have kept all the notes in a special book.'

'I felt great afterwards as he had a very positive understanding of the content of my poetry.'

The final exhibition and celebration was a significant experience for some participants and acted as an opportunity to further celebrate work and build confidence.

'I was pleased that my photos were of use. I was delighted that my Whiteford Lighthouse photos were used in the video about Dementia.'

'I enjoyed being part of something bigger than me! I would definitely do it again. Fridays 'Finale' was great too, a great atmosphere, a lot of people though, although I thoroughly enjoyed it.'

Participants shared that they learnt new creative skills through the process.

'Doing what I did on the paper and learning something new, learning the basics of using water colours, I learned something new that I did not know before, I have got new skills and really enjoyed the visit, it was just fantastic.'

5.2 The relationship between participant and artist

However, the relationship between artist and participant went well beyond the transactional exchange of skills and information. Creative processes enabled a sharing of stories and deeper connection that helped relieve loneliness.

'Favourite part of the visit - Bill telling me his story and only since realised (my cognitive processing slow) this connected to a song we sang Hallelujah-the story Bill shared with music connected to something meaningful which is still processing but no conclusion but a kind of healing that has no words.'

This process can involve a level of vulnerability, honesty and intimacy not usually required from a professional relationship.

'Listening to Bill share a story about himself captivated my sense of trusting interest and broke the ice of lack of confidence and fear I held.'



5.3 The impact on mental and physical wellbeing

There are indications that the mental health benefits gained by participants were paired with physical health improvements as well.

'I feel like running around...my energy levels are amazing, better than the medication I am currently taking.'

'Singing is soul medicine.'

In some cases the process supported really very profound experiences of healing from past trauma, beyond just the relief of loneliness in the 'here and now'. The creative process allowed a connection with, and processing of, concealed memories and hurts.

'Bill last night sent me two recordings of my singing and I cried, as something previously that felt stolen returned, and despite the passage of time and age of 62 and health changes, my voice came home so I can at last find my peace... so when it is my time to kiss my life on Earth goodbye, I take with me the gift of PSU team bringing home to me the lost-stolen part of me.'

For some participants, as above, the project has been an important opportunity to rediscover previous creative interests and to re-find space for them in life.

5.4 The impact of meeting in the home

A number of participants have been known for some time by PSU and have engaged in previous projects but are prevented from attending activities at the centre due to developing health problems. Their isolation and loneliness is particularly harsh, with memories of the enjoyable times they spent engaged in creative activities in the past. The provision of opportunities in the home has been particularly helpful for them in feeling reconnected with themselves and others.

5.5 'Paying it forward'

There are examples of participants building on the benefits they have received through engagement in the project and 'paying it forward', for example by suggesting and supporting the development of new project ideas or using their new skills to help others.

'It was amazing and just what I needed. I am doing art sessions now with children in the church.'

'Emma has Ataxia and brought an idea for a group to us called 'neuro speak up' - a group for those with neurological conditions – this group now runs fortnightly on Fridays.'

5.6 The impact on loneliness and isolation

In relation to the key outcome of tackling loneliness and isolation, there is plenty of evidence that the project, and PSU's longer term work, is highly effective.

'I've benefitted over several years and grown in confidence, skills and kicked loneliness into touch.'

Section 6: Key findings from the Artist/Volunteer reflective diaries

An analysis of the Artist/Volunteer reflective diaries has identified the following key themes and learning:

6.1 Relationships

From the start the project has benefitted from the volunteers' pre-existing social networks, with some relationships with participants pre-established in other contexts. This helped participants relax quickly, connect with the artists, and engage in positive activity. In turn, volunteers commented that the shared creative process enabled a further deepening of these pre-existing relationships.

'I already know Barbara, and this session only took the relationship further.'

The artists and volunteers on the project communicated a real desire to listen to, understand and connect with participants. It is this commitment and emotional engagement with the work that underpinned the key relationships and supported the outcomes. This extended to a genuine interest in, and passion for, the participants' creative efforts, which provided a strong focus for engagement.

'I really like Barbara and we get on well. I feel the more I see Barbara the more I will understand her opinions and what she wants to raise awareness about.'

'It was interesting meeting James and I feel we had things in common. We were able to share some interests and similar experiences.'

This listening and connection, along with the wide range of skills possessed by the artists and volunteers, and the informal nature of the sessions, allowed for a flexible approach that was highly adaptive to participant's moods, interests and desires.

'We were able to converse in Welsh during the visit, and I think this put her at ease and she felt more ready to share/confide thoughts.'

'I had the realisation that Anna should tell her story in a storytelling fashion rather than following a script.'

The relationship between artists and volunteers was crucial too, with these setting the 'tone' for the sessions and the developing relationships with participants.

'Highlighting the importance of the chemistry of the team and the ability of them to be able to provide a safe – friendly and fun environment.'

6.2 Impact on mental health and wellbeing

It is clear from the artist and volunteer descriptions that participants really valued the home sessions, looked forward to them, and that they provided important opportunities for improved mental health. This was often evidenced by the enthusiastic welcome given at the front door!

'Angela said she'd not been feeling good the previous day, but she was feeling better on the day of our visit and had been looking forward to it.'

'Sarah was at the door within seconds of the first knock and welcomed us inside, eager to begin. She was delighted to see us.'

'I wasn't sure what to expect and I'm loving this!' 'Can you come back tomorrow?'

Artists and volunteers described observing the increase in confidence of participants across the course of a session and the course of the project as a whole.

'I could see that Emma was a little tentative at times as she felt she wasn't singing as well as she used to do...but, as the session progressed, she finally became more confident and was able to sing through the last recording without a pause.'

Participants also valued the social contact and were explicit in describing the positive impact on experiences of loneliness and isolation.

'She said that she loved having the company, because living alone can be very lonely.'

However, the actual creative activities themselves often had a therapeutic value and promoted relaxation and wellbeing as well.

'Got to throwing on the wheel. David kept expressing "O my God its alive", "I can't believe how its making me feel ". Cath also took to the wheel." I can't believe how relaxing this is !!'

6.3 The significance of meeting in the home

The unique aspect of the project that saw artists and volunteers spend significant time in participants' homes means that they often gained first hand insights into the challenges they face. These included practical problems such as inappropriate housing, along with personal difficulties with depression and loneliness. This can be emotionally challenging for volunteers particularly (it is interesting that so few took up the offer of coaching). However, it may also be worth considering how artists and volunteers are informed effectively so they can report practical needs and considerations to the appropriate authorities?

'The stairs leading up to his flat are not suitable for his conditions, especially as he uses crutches to get around. James' home is full of items, and he might possibly need some help around his home, to keep everything tidy and sort things out.'

'However, from what Angela told us, it is obvious she is struggling in all areas of her life.'

Nevertheless, relationships developed in the home can be characterised by a vulnerability and familiarity that is not as accessible in a centre-based setting. People are in their own space, surrounded by items that communicate important aspects of their lives, and they are engaging in hospitality in inviting artists and participants into their homes. This particular type of relationship was significant in opening up space for meaningful engagement, communication, creativity and change.

'The relationship between Dorothy and myself was already there, but this session and seeing her in the context of her own home has given me more insight. For instance, I was not aware that she was so keen on the birdlife in her garden... We were lucky enough to see a woodpecker at her bird feeder. Maybe, birds could be the topic at another session.'

In addition, the development of a 1-2-1 relationship in the home removes the focus from an organisation and it's building. This means that participants can be 'followed' when they find themselves having to move location. For example, one participant became more frail and moved to a care home. Sessions simply continued in the care home. Quite a few participants had engaged in activities at PSU's centre but were too unwell or frail to attend, so the KOP project allowed engagement to continue at home instead. This aspect of the project allowed for a truly 'person centred' approach.

6.4 Lessons in what works creatively

Artists and volunteers gained much learning in relation to what works with participants and what is less successful and to be avoided. For example, it was found to be beneficial to keep things simple in the group, care home based sessions as too much complexity and choice caused confusion.

'Myself, Sam and Ceri discussed the session later and I found that in the art & craft session there seemed to be too much mess and so many options that residents didn't at first know what to do.'

The creative process was particularly effective when the participant's artistic interest can be linked to a particular challenge, need or concern and therefore used to explore, understand and process this issue.

'With both issues I decided to take them and try and form something positive. I suggested to Angela to create two more stories or poems sharing her feelings of her condition and how it is progressing. Angela was overjoyed by these aspects and was keen to begin!'



6.5 Other lessons

Artists reported that in future it would be useful to be given the opportunity to spend more time together, with opportunities for relationship building and reflection. Suggestions included:

'It might be good to have a pre project meet with the artists to share the objects and aims visions etc and have the artist feed into this part of the process... we as artist could just do with a creative day to share and learn together and get to envision how we can develop this practice.'

A key frustration was the short term nature of the project, with a sense that so much more could be achieved with more time to give to each participant.

'Just the frustration - that we could do with so much more time - ie sessions to really develop relationships and ambitions etc...'

Particular challenges were identified in relation to working with one particular participant who is suffering with dementia. Although she enjoyed the sessions and seemed to gain benefits in terms of wellbeing, she didn't remember the artist from one visit to the next and the volunteer and artist struggled to engage her effectively in creative activities. The artist has suggested that further training in working with people with dementia would be helpful.

Section 7: Key findings from the MSC panel discussions

The following findings emerged from the MSC panel conversations, grouped here under key themes:

7.1 The impact on mental health, isolation and loneliness

The project gave participants a sense of purpose. This was particularly important for those who have retired, are isolated, and who face physical and/or mental difficulties which prevent them from engaging in activities that gave them meaning in the past.

In addition, Story-tellers and panel members described the positive impact for volunteers, with one panel member (also a project volunteer) comparing his experiences of worth and being valued in the project to his experiences as a Teaching Assistant, a role that was paid but that he experienced as rather thankless. Volunteers felt their role was significant and made a key contribution to the impact of the project for participants in particular. They felt they were 'making a difference'. This had a highly positive impact on their own mental health.

Panel members also identified and discussed examples of positive impacts on the physical health of participants. These are often easier to see and measure than outcomes related to mental health but are also often strongly related to mental health, with examples of progress being made in physical health having a positive influence on mental health and vice versa – a kind of virtuous circle!

7.2 The role of relationships between participants, artists and volunteers

The relationships between participant, artist and volunteer were seen as crucial to the success of the project insofar as they were able to model and 'make real' the desired kinship relationships that underpin the project. Particularly important was the nature of feedback within these relationships – the importance of the participant receiving affirmation of their work from the artist, the need for the volunteer to receive effective feedback from the artist and so-on. This could be considered further as a crucial factor in the project – how might more effective, regular, ongoing opportunities for reflection and feedback within small kinship groups be enabled as the project progresses? It may help to see these small groups of three as basic communities with all the associated potential. The need for more effective team induction and training was identified as part of this wider issue of team development and relationships.

Whilst there were examples of artists teaching participants new skills, the relationships were more nuanced than 'teacher/pupil'. Artists acted as inspiration, catalyst and encouragement, creating the space and environment for the participant to develop their own creative side. One insightful story-teller summed this up as follows:

'When I say that they're there to help, it's not, oh you need help. It's not like that at all, because you don't realise you're getting help.'

Sometimes project staff and artists had their own stories to tell about challenges and change, often in relation to their own journeys within the PSU 'family'. The honesty and vulnerability communicated in sharing these stories was one contributing factor towards the

kind of space that allows for participants' own explorations and transformation. One person's story can become an inspiration and encouragement for others in this context.

Participants liked the concept of 'kinship' and felt that it captures the nature of the relationships that developed through the project, and particularly the role of these relationships in creating the space for healing and change. Some of these relationships were identified as continuing beyond the end of this phase of the project.

7.3 The role of creative processes and activities

The relationships between participant, artist and volunteer, and particularly between the participant and artist, created the space for effective creative activity to take place. The affirmation of, and encouragement from, the artist was particularly important in enabling the participant to explore sensitive issues and memories through the creative process. It created a sense of self-worth as participants experienced their work as valued by an 'expert'. It also created a context in which the artist was free to be highly flexible, adjusting plans and activities in 'real time' as they got to know the participant.

The creative activities gave participants a chance to 'speak from the heart' and communicate significant emotions. Not everyone has the chance to do this in a safe space where their honesty is valued and celebrated.

7.4 The significance of meeting in the home, and how this relates to centre based work

Holding sessions in the participant's home allowed for a deeper and more meaningful engagement with the person's life. This allowed the observation of immediate circumstances, living conditions etc but also proved to be an enabling environment for the sharing of life-stories and memories. These stories and memories were also gathered and expressed in multiple ways through creative activities (e.g. story, poetry, song, imagery) and through the MSC stories. One MSC panel group described this process as 'bearing witness' to a life, and considered this an important factor in the project that allowed participants to recognize, value and process their own experiences. The stories, once captured and communicated, also became opportunities for other people to reflect on and process their own stories.

It was also observed that hosting people in your home is a significant experience in its own right, particularly for those who are lonely and lack opportunities for hospitality. One panel member noted that 'everyone deserves to have people around!'



7.5 'What happens next' for participants, artists and volunteers?

There was some concern expressed about the potential impact on participants when a project ceases or winds down. Initial positive impact can give way to a sense of loss and 'relapse'. Nevertheless, in this case, it was emphasised that continued participation will be possible through the second stage of the project but also that the context of the project within PSU's wider collection of projects and activities gives multiple opportunities for longer term involvement. It was pointed out that three participants that hadn't left the house since Covid are now engaged in activities regularly at PSU's centre.

Nevertheless, panel members agreed that the nature of this work takes time. Participants can require space after initial invitation is made to consider their involvement and build confidence to attend. Once involved, truly trusting and nurturing relationships can take time to develop. Once creative inspiration is found, it can take further time to develop the skills, vision and practice to achieve the desired outcomes. There is a strong desire to build and resource a long term context for this work so it can continue and bear further fruit for more people. Consistency and continuation are seen as vital to the next stage.

7.6 The overall impact of the project and organisation

Staff described a sense of satisfaction that, in their eyes, the project has been successful. They have seen examples of participants growing and changing. They have seen a visible positive impact on wellbeing, loneliness and self-worth.

Panel members identified that many participants experienced a strong sense of community in connection with People Speak Up as an organisation, with one story-teller explaining that she has ‘found her tribe!’ Relationships in the organisation are characterised by mutual respect and humanity. The organisation is experienced as a meaningful community and this provides the bedrock and value base for the creation of the small kinship communities that sustained this project.

There was some concern that the overall positive nature of the stories being collected could mask, and make it difficult to express, some of the harder dynamics and issues that are going on for people. There is a question to be explored about how relationships and processes can be developed further to create safe space for more difficult emotions to be acknowledged and faced, and for more challenging feedback to be received.

There was a positive response to the MSC process, but also a realisation that so many experiences or ‘nuggets’ take place within the organisation’s work that are not captured. A desire was expressed to explore how MSC and similar processes could be used to develop increased opportunities for ongoing reflection and learning.

7.7 Panel participants’ emotional response to stories

Panel members experienced a range of emotional responses when reading and discussing the stories, including:

- Sadness, when faced with the loneliness, isolation and struggles of the story-tellers.
- Empathy – panel members described their attitude towards certain participants softening as they heard and understood their stories.
- Some panel members described feeling a sense of pride when they understood the efforts that participants demonstrated in embracing change.
- Pleasure was experienced in sharing and enjoying stories of clear change and impact.
- Hope, inspired by strong evidence that the work is making a real transformative difference for people.
- Panel members felt a sense of connection to the story-tellers and their stories.
- *‘That’s why we do what we do! It works!’*

7.8 The ‘most significant stories’

The panel finally chose three stories they felt were most significant in relation to the impact of the project and the learning for the organisation. These were as follows, with the reasoning summarized for each. *Edited versions of all three stories are included in the appendix:*

Story 1 – Anonymous (project participant)

Story 1 was considered by the group to be a ‘true fairytale’, containing strong images of self-reflection and healing. The role of the volunteer and artist in the process of change was central. The story contains ‘those kind of gold nuggets of self-ownership, connection, reflection, leading into resilience’.

One particular image from the story stood out:

'And there was one a couple of months ago - a chap who had us all on our feet, or tried to, and doing actions and things, and because I have a pair of walking sticks to help me I suddenly realised I could use them to pull me up. With a walking stick in hand you can make it look like you're doing a lot of things but you're not, you're just standing still and moving your arms. You can enter into it and enjoy it. It was a fantastic session.'

The panel considered that the participant was unlikely to have realised they could use their sticks in this way in any other setting. It is an example of the impact of creative experiences on both mental and physical health.

The story was felt to 'cover a lot of bases from the artist's perspective as well'. The artist 'going ahead and doing the thing himself' was effective in drawing the participant in to their own experience and the array of methods used by the artist is indicative of the diverse approaches used throughout the project as a whole. The participant had a creative history that had been, to some extent, lost but recaptured through their involvement with the project.

Story 2 – Duke Al Durham (artist)

The group felt that story 2 spoke to 'larger issues' and they liked the manner in which the story-teller spoke of their own journey from 'a sort of theoretical point of view, of thinking that the elderly had stories to tell, (to) the reality of coming into people's homes and finding how they live and what struggles they face'. This is an important example of the fact that artists and volunteers experienced their own journeys within the project, a theme that emerged elsewhere in the evaluation. It also demonstrates the impact of experiencing another person's life 'up close', in this case within their home.

The story-teller comments that 'I just think creativity in general is so powerful' – a belief that is itself captured powerfully by the story.

The group saw strong links to story 3 (Stephanie's story) and felt that the two should be read 'in conversation with each other'. They were prompted to re-visit Duke's story after reading Stephanie's. The two stories together demonstrate the strength and value of the artist/volunteer relationship as a solid basis for the 3-way kinship relationship.

Story 3 – Stephanie Simms (volunteer)

The panel thought that, combined with Duke's, Stephanie's story 'said it all'. They drew attention to the differences in story-telling style, with Duke communicating very thoughtful, reflective insights and Stephanie bringing real 'personality, personal story and (great) sound bites!' These two styles were seen as complimentary.

The group were pleased that the three final 'most significant stories' contained one for each of participant, artist and volunteer, and thus captured the insights from each section of the kinship team!

7.9 Key themes from all the stories

Finally, the panel agreed the following key themes from across the stories:

- Loneliness was a cross cutting theme, particularly the experiences of older people in losing opportunities and experiences post-retirement.
- The development of relationships of trust and shared experience was crucial to the project's success.
- For many of the participants, the project exceeded expectations.
- Empathy and a deep desire to make a difference characterises the team.
- *'I think what comes through for me above anything is the connection to not only other people, but art forms, and like how they have been so deeply affected by the art form, being able to express themselves through art.'*
- Participants, artists, volunteers and staff all 'need to feel needed'.
- *'I didn't expect there to be such a like a poignant journey for everyone that seemed to be like equal across participants, artists and volunteers. They all have their own journey and they all, like, mutually benefited from the arrangement.'*
- There's so much more to do, and so much further this can be taken!

Section 8: Summary of findings and recommendations

The following is a summary of the key findings and recommendations from across the Kreative Kinship on Prescription project evaluation.

8.1 The key role of relationships

The ('kinship') relationships between participant, volunteer and artist are crucial to the project's success and create the foundations for impact and outcomes. It is helpful to view these as 'micro-communities' based on the same values of community that underpin PSU's wider work. Where successful they are characterised by respect, humanity and vulnerability. Effective communication is vital. In particular participants value constructive feedback from artists and this is a key factor in improvements to confidence and wellbeing. There is a desire to explore these 'micro-communities' further and to increase opportunities for shared reflection and learning within them.

Recommendations:

- To create additional opportunities for kinship 'micro-communities' (participant, artist and volunteer) to actively feedback and reflect together on their developing relationships, creative practice and related experiences.
- To gather artists and volunteers together at the beginning of future projects for briefing and to build relationships as a team.



8.2 The role of creative processes and activities

The creative process itself, alongside the relationships, is the basis for much of the positive outcomes related to mental health and wellbeing. Often the processes themselves have a therapeutic quality. Real transformation takes place when participants are able to use creative expression to witness to and process difficult memories, emotions and experiences. In these cases the final 'products' constitute an important form of self-expression and provide opportunities for others to understand and empathise but also to share and process their own stories. This raises questions as to how these spaces are safely and appropriately managed. It also provides an opportunity to integrate artistic work into the reflection and evaluation processes.

Recommendation:

- In reviewing the MSC process used this time, and in thinking about future approaches, opportunities to use other creative 'products' from the project in evaluation processes could be considered. E.g. could paintings, poems or photographs be used alongside stories to create opportunities for reflection and learning and to discuss difficult issues?

8.3 The significance of meeting in participant homes

The unique aspect of the project that saw sessions take place in participant homes turned out to be significant for three reasons:

- It allows a person centred approach that is not linked to, or limited by, connection to a particular community building. This means that if people move house (for example into a care home), or can no longer attend the centre for health reasons, relationships and activities can continue.
- It facilitates a different type and depth of relationship. Artists and volunteers observe and engage with the participant in the wider visible context of their lives. This creates interesting opportunities to reflect on memories, families, life experiences etc.
- It also means that staff and volunteers are gaining insights into some of the challenges participants face (for example poor/unsafe housing, poverty, dementia etc). Staff and volunteers should be trained and supported to know how to respond and who to contact for further support where necessary.

Recommendations:

- Staff and volunteers should receive training and support in how to respond when they become aware of risks or challenges faced by participants in the home. (It may well be that this happens already).
- Artists have requested additional training in how to work with people experiencing dementia.

8.4 The impact on loneliness and isolation

The project was found to have significantly reduced loneliness and isolation for participants. The kinship relationships were central to this but so was the creative process itself. In many cases relationships have been sustained beyond the end of this project phase and

participants have joined other PSU groups and activities. Questions were raised in relation to the durability over time of this impact on loneliness. Will participants still feel the benefits in a year's time for example?

Recommendation:

- Future organisational evaluation plans could include the collection of MSC stories (or other methods) across time, seeking to explore the impact after 6 months, a year or more.

8.5 The 'pay it forward' factor

A number of participants and volunteers described how they have made use of new-found skills and confidence to benefit others through contributing positively in other groups, setting up new groups, developing new project ideas or volunteering in other projects. One staff member explicitly described this as 'paying it forward'. This appreciation of the benefits received from participation and the desire to benefit others is a key driver in PSU's wider work, generating new energy and volunteer time.

Recommendation:

- Perhaps participants could be encouraged to consciously explore their strengths, skills and knowledge and to consider how they might like to 'pay it forward' as they progress through the project.

8.6 The long term nature of change

A key theme emerging through the evaluation process was the acknowledgement that the formation of meaningful relationships and the creation of real change takes time. Participants, artists, volunteers and staff are deeply committed to the project and are convinced at the need to continue and sustain the project.

Recommendation:

- Organisational managers should continue to make the case for long term, sustainable funding with partners and funders. In particular, there may be opportunities to engage with public sector health and care providers and to explore developing interest in social prescription and other relevant policy approaches.

8.7 The role of evaluation and learning

There was enthusiasm expressed for the process of Most Significant Change (MSC) and particularly for the panel conversations and the reflection and learning this allowed. However, there was also some concern that, with a natural focus on positive experiences and stories, it may be difficult for people to share and reflect on more difficult, challenging or negative stories and experiences.

Recommendations:

- The experience of using MSC with the wider team should be reviewed and plans made to integrate long term approaches that are creative and that involve all stakeholders in reflection and learning.

- Processes should be explored that allow for the gathering and exploration of more challenging experiences and feedback.



Section 9: Appendix – The three most significant stories

The following three stories were picked as the 'most significant' by the MSC panel. They have been edited but are told in the story-tellers' own words. Permission has been granted by all story-tellers to share their stories.

9.1 Story 1

Story-teller: Wants to remain anonymous

Role: Participant

Story collector: Carys Phillips

Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and what life was like before you got involved in the Kreative Kinship project?

I'll start in 2009 as that's when everything went hay wire for me, before that I was counselling and offering various therapies to people. Then in 2009, oops, my systems broke down and I had to stop working and not been able to work since really. That came as a bit of a blow because working with people and offering a range of therapies to people was important to me. It's been slow progress from 2009 to now where I am able to walk with walking sticks and get up and down the stairs with a chair lift. The other thing that's happened is my memory is deteriorating and we laugh about it but you can't do much else.

How did you get involved in the project? What did you hope might happen as a result of getting involved?

Well it was, at the time, somewhere I could go where (my partner) could take me to leave me without anything to worry about. The opportunity to meet and talk and listen to other people was really important at that time. So it's a really good project and it offers a range of different interests like a wide spectrum. And there was one a couple of months ago - a chap who had us all on our feet, or tried to, and doing actions and things, and because I have a pair of walking sticks to help me I suddenly realised I could use them to pull me up. With a walking stick in hand you can make it look like you're doing a lot of things but you're not, you're just standing still and moving your arms. You can enter into it and enjoy it. It was a fantastic session.

I enjoyed Bill coming individually. Its music - I enjoy playing the drums. I'm not brilliant but I used to have a guitar then I wasn't physically able to do it so I fell back on the drums and he brought a drum. It was nice to be able to sit down and use both my hands to actually make the sound. I was interested because Bill said 'you are pretty good, you are doing the backbeats' and I had to ask him what that was and he described it.

One of the first things is you're in contact, if you can't get out and about, with one or two people who bring a different dimension in. It could be music, chatting or something they're interested in, and what happened there is it actually helps with the memory which is really crucial, because through talking sometimes it clicks, it's a switch that goes 'ah yeah I've experienced that'.

As a result of participating in the project what do you think has been the most significant change for you personally?

The most significant change is my confidence really because of various problems. I am no longer driving so I am more isolated because they have taken the busses off here and I can't afford taxis. So it's coming to terms. Some of it was a sudden loss of capacity and some gradual like my memory. Memory has been one of the biggest ones and physical problems.

What caused this change?

Bill and others coming and, sort of, in a sense, chatting and the respect that they have. The ability to laugh and you don't feel you are being looked down on, it's just like you are no different which is really fantastic. Because that, again, builds your confidence. This is a fantastic way to have a go on the drums – it's like 'oh yeah I still have a sense of rhythm!'

If you were to tell other people about People Speak Up, what would you say?

If you got the chance, grab it! No hesitation, just trust them, they are very trustworthy, open and respectful. It doesn't matter how negative thoughts you have of yourself, that isn't where they're at. Last time... Emily, she said gently come on, so she held my hand and smiled and we danced. That was fantastic, while Bill was playing the guitar, and I joined the singing if I knew the words or hummed if I didn't.

When I say they are there to help, it's not in a "oh you need help", it's not like that at all because you don't realise you are getting help.

What title would you give your story?

What title? Right: If I hold back a minute what I got in mind is...Life is like a road and sometimes there is painful turn offs and suddenly you are somewhere else so if I think of it like that...

This one has big colourful lights around it: "The Welcoming Road"

9.2 Story 2

Story-teller: Duke AI

Role: Artist

Story collector: Steffan Thomas

Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and what life was like before you got involved in the Kreative Kinship project?

My name is Duke AI, I'm a spoken word poet and rapper from south Wales. I've been writing poetry and raps ever since I was about 11, and by 12/13 years old it very quickly became a form of self-therapy and positive coping mechanism as I started to experience horrifying intrusive thoughts. I later found out that I had OCD, which is a heavily stigmatised and misunderstood mental health condition. And that's pretty much where my poetry journey really took off, because I was afraid to tell anybody about it but I was able to express myself through the pen. I just think creativity in general is so powerful.

Do you remember how you got involved with KKOP?

Eleanor and Carys just suggested this project to me, and basically asked if I wanted to be a part of it. I've always wanted to work with the elderly. The thing is about the elderly – I really feel like their voice is not heard enough at all. I think society forgets that – these people have lived a life already, they've often got extremely wise words and lessons and amazing wisdom to pass on and it just gets lost, I don't know,

As a result of participating in the project what do you think has been the most significant change for you personally?

Good question.

I think, for me, I'm quite an emotionally intelligent person and I grew up on a housing association with not a huge amount of money, so when I visited some places there was already sort of knowledge or experience there, so I was prepared. However in certain areas or certain houses where certain people live, the way they were living was far – I don't want to say the wrong words here – it was far 'worse' I guess that I did think.

I remember the first visit I did, I just felt a lot of sympathy for a couple of the lovely people that I worked with because they were struggling with physical conditions so a simple task of cleaning the house, for example, was nearly impossible. They were living in very small rooms, small space.

I think the commonality between everybody as well is definitely loneliness. I think that plays a huge role in their lives unfortunately. And you can tell that it effects them, especially when we go over and visit them. They just want to tell us their story, what they've been up to.

What caused this change?

I don't think anything changed; I was just more aware. When you see in real life, you know, the struggles with money. It's frustrating because you feel like everybody should be equal, and be able to afford things. It's very sad.

Unfortunately, Dorthy, love her, she passed away. Which was really sad. I only met Dorothy once but it was an extremely, such a positive session – Dorothy went straight in for the poetry, wanted to write about nature, was really bubbly and ready to go. Again, she had to

have nurses coming in because of her condition, because she needed help. And then that happened - she had a fall, it was just awful. Again, it's loneliness, you know? Maybe if she wasn't on her own that wouldn't have happened.

If you were to tell other people about People Speak Up, what would you say?

I would say that People Speak Up are an organisation that cares, but they care beyond caring. They're full of a team that have empathy, compassion, emotional intelligence and most of all love.

What title would you give your story?

Obsessive Compulsive Duke, probably. Haha. It has just been such a big part of my life. It has been huge. It's probably the main reason why I write, which has led me to this job.

9.3 Story 3

Story-teller: Stephanie Simms

Role: volunteer

Story collector: Dave Horton

Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and what your life was like before you got involved in the Kreative Kinship on Prescription project?

I started coming to People Speak Up in 2016. It's certainly changed my life and as far as the KOP sessions are concerned, it certainly has made me see other people's situations and understand them. To actually go into people's homes and see them, and see how they live and what they do has been amazing. I feel as if I have become more friends with the people that I've met.

What has changed as a result of the project?

People will often open up and tell you more than they would if they'd been sitting here, say, with a group of other people. Because there's just a couple of us, myself and the artist, they tend to open up much more. It's nice to see them relax, smile, lean forward when they're talking to you, and express themselves. And they often, not often but sometimes, will go off on a tangent because they're happy to talk about something else as well.

One in particular. I'd not met this person before. Neither I or the artist had, and we didn't know what to expect. I think we were both taken aback quite a lot when that person kept getting up and walking around and changing the subject. Eventually though, I think the second meeting, we actually got them sitting down and starting to make notes about what they wanted. This particular person wanted to write a script and, er, had written it before and lost it. The second session they had actually started to write it again but couldn't seem to get to grips with it but I noticed that they are now becoming more able to write.

If you let people cross your doorstep you're either going to chuck them out or learn to trust them. I think in all the cases that I've been...the trust is...you can feel them relaxing as the sessions go on.

What has changed for you as a result of your involvement?

Oh gosh. I know the first time I went to each of the different houses it was 'what am I going to find here?' And, er, I suppose it took me a good part of the first lot to get with the situation with the people I didn't know. But it's made me feel more relaxed. I find it difficult to talk to people I don't know to start off with. But this has shown me a bit that I can talk to people. It's a confidence building thing and, I think it's confidence building not just for me but from the artist's and from the client's point of view as well. I think. I live alone so, I go out as much as I can because I hate my own company. So I appreciate that, these people who live on their own can feel lonely, can feel 'I want company but, how do I meet people?'

If you could tell other people about People Speak Up, what would you say?

Oh, where do I start?! I belong to a WI and I have...people have asked me 'what's People Speak Up?' I cannot put it in one or two simple paragraphs. There is so much going on. I love...I haven't any contact with young children so when youngsters come in that was a real

learning curve for me, getting to talk to youngsters, teenagers. I suppose that was my biggest challenge. I still don't know them terribly well but enough to, you know, chat to.

It was through (my cancer story) that I became involved. We sang and we also told our own personal stories and because of that I came here and then started coming to Spoken Word Saturday.

If you could give that story a name, what would it be?

Well, it's actually called 'sing my story, tell my story'

I chose it because it doesn't mention cancer. People sing, and laugh and have fun, and it's great. It's very much like that here. If you're feeling a bit down they build you up, and if you've got any concerns, Eleanor's always there with an ear. She'll listen.

I hope what I've brought here, to this Kinship project is the experience that I've gained over the last 6,7 years, whatever it is, from People Speak Up. It's given me more confidence and I've met so many different people, of all sorts of religions, genres, genders, all sorts of things. I figure I've opened up more. I've never really been biased about people's sexuality or colour or race or creed, but it's really opened my mind up more to realise what some of these people have gone through. Worse than I've gone through, and the support that they get here.