Creative Home Delivery Service

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 Creative Home Delivery Service (CHDS), gained from the various methods of data collection including:

- Participant wellbeing scores.
- Artist and facilitator reflective diaries.
- Most Significant Change (MSC) Panel stories and discussions.
- Causal mapping of MSC story transcripts.

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

CHDS is an arts and health home delivery service for older people living in Carmarthenshire who are currently receiving, or are at risk of needing, domiciliary care. The project is led by People Speak Up (PSU) and aims to improve mental health, wellbeing and physical health and to reduce loneliness and isolation by providing creative activities in the home.

1.3 Evaluation approaches

CHDS used four main evaluation methods aimed at maximizing learning, improving practice and outcomes, and providing evidence for funders and other stakeholders. These were:

- Participant wellbeing scores taken using the 'Well-being Numerical Rating Scale (WB-NRSs)' at the beginning and end of each session.
- Artist and facilitator reflective diaries.
- Most Significant Change (MSC) – a qualitative approach that collects and uses participant stories of change for group reflection and learning.
- Causal mapping – an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated map of causal links between project activities and outcomes using MSC story transcripts.

1.4 Key findings from the evaluation

The following is a summary of key findings from across the evaluation methodologies.

Project impact on participant social isolation and wellbeing

Benefits to mental health and wellbeing were reported by participants, carers and artists, and were aided particularly by effective management, creative engagement and social interaction. Some participants gained improvements in physical health as a result of the integration of movement based activities. The encouragement and gentle challenge of the

artists, along with opportunities to celebrate artistic output, all contributed to increased wellbeing.

Development and learning of artists and facilitators

Artists bring a wide range of skills to the work, both relational and creative. Their own lived experience of mental health challenges and the positive impact of creative activity formed the basis of deep and empathetic relationships. As a result, the project opened up space for reflection on memory, feelings, hopes and fears. This was described as 'soul medicine' and contrasted with more clinical approaches taken in traditional care settings. For some artists there was a transformation in the way they perceive their role as artists, seeing the facilitation role as a creative process in its own right. Effective support for artists has been crucial.

Partnerships and co-production

At the heart of the project is a team of participant, artist and facilitator. However, these sit within a wider set of relationships that include family and cares of participants, and project partners. Together, these stakeholders collaborated in co-producing positive wellbeing outcomes with the participant, with each bring their own knowledge and skills. A number of recommendations were made for strengthening this co-productive approach, including by sharing information about artist and participant before the first session and by connecting participants to each other, and artists to each other, more effectively. The increasing role of project partners brings new opportunities for referral.

Impact on 'significant others'

In addition to the impact on participants, the project has also supported significantly improved wellbeing amongst carers of participants. They described increased peace of mind associated with the knowledge that their loved ones are 'in safe hands' and receiving opportunities to build new relationships and new experiences. They described a reduction in feelings of guilt and of pressure to provide all the participant's emotional, physical and intellectual needs.

Organisational culture

PSU has developed a unique organisational culture that prioritises relationships characterised by equality, friendship and a spirit of accompaniment. Artists are supported and engaged as co-creators on their own journey of change that is supported. The organisation's physical presence in a community, along with its portfolio of projects, enables consistency and stability along with the opportunity to support participants into new experiences. Nevertheless, this consistency is challenging in a context of short term funding.

Impact and learning from the MSC approach

The MSC approach enabled a range of stakeholders including participants, staff and partners to be involved in evaluating and learning from the project. The use of stories allowed the team to explore the relational, emotional and spiritual aspects of change associated with the project. This iteration of the project included the voices of carers and partners in addition to participants and staff. The MSC panel agreed that narrative approaches to evaluation should be used alongside quantitative approaches in all aspects of PSU's work.

Other issues and findings

The evaluation has demonstrated the groundbreaking nature of PSU's work and the potential it holds for other communities to benefit from similar approaches. Well established and consistently funded community led organisations are crucial to this vision, along with recognition and support from power and resource holders including local and national government.

Lack of transport provision made it difficult for some community members to access the project. Community transport provision could be explored with local partners.

Section 2: Project description and aims

2.1 An introduction to People Speak Up (PSU)

PSU is an arts and health charity based in Llanelli, established in 2017 and delivering work across the Hywel Dda and Swansea region. PSU creates 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

PSU Theory of Change

2.2 The Creative Home Delivery Service (CHDS)

CHDS is an arts and health home delivery service for older people living in Carmarthenshire who are currently receiving, or are at risk of needing, domiciliary care. The project seeks to build on the success and experiences of PSU's Stories on Prescription project, Creative Friendships on Prescription project, and on previous iterations of the Creative Home Delivery Service.

This project phase aimed to reduce the amount of domiciliary care needed by improving mental health and wellbeing, and to improve physical health by integrating dance and exercises to increase mobility. Participants received home visits from a project artist and creative facilitator. Through storytelling, dance, music and visual arts, time and space was created for older people to receive meaningful high-end artistic connection with an experienced professional artist.

Participants who were able to leave their homes were introduced to PSU activities at the Ffwrnes Fach centre in order to open up opportunities for social engagement. Those unable to physically access this space were encouraged to attend online and hybrid events.

The project also sought to improve staff wellbeing by providing fortnightly one-to-one and group coaching sessions.

A video about the project can be accessed here:
https://youtu.be/y2nrVbshyh8?si=TyUthoFC_v27JrsB

2.3 Project partners

CHDS was delivered in partnership with the following organisations and individuals:

- Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) made a financial contribution to the service of £10,000 and also identify participants to refer into the service.
- Hywel Dda University Health Board enabled GP clusters to refer into the service through their social prescribing scheme.
- In addition, other Connected Carmarthenshire partners referred into the project, including Pobl and Nacros.
- The following freelance artists facilitated creative activities alongside project facilitators: Bill Taylor Beales, Sam Hood, Duke Al, Mared Davies, Lisa Evans, Ceri Phillips, Stirling Steward, Nerissa Joan Faulkner, Tia Zakura Camilleri, Kate Woodley and Karen Fitzpatrick
- Ali Franks ('Reconnecting Coach') offered fortnightly well-being sessions for staff.

2.4 Project Impact, Outputs, Outcomes and Questions

The Creative Home Delivery Service has sought the following impact and outcomes:

Beneficiary group	Profile	Outcomes	Outputs (numbers)

Older people at home receiving domiciliary care or at risk of needing domiciliary care	Older people referred to the project, often experiencing loneliness, isolation and poor mental and physical wellbeing	Improved well-being and mental health, Improved mobility and physical health, reduction in feelings of loneliness and isolation	22
Unpaid carers	Unpaid carers to the older people	Improved well-being and mental health	
Artists and creative facilitators	Artists and creative facilitators working with older people	Improved wellbeing and mental health .	14
Project partners	Including Carmarthenshire County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board	Learning more about the needs of their service users and the impact that arts and health charities are having.	2

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

1) Are participants demonstrating an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing?
2) Are participants demonstrating an improvement in physical health?
3) Can we measure the number of participants decreasing domiciliary care visits in a day?
4) The improvement in loneliness and isolation.
5) What is the overall impact on artists receiving wellbeing coaching?

Section 3: Evaluation methodology

3.1 Purpose of evaluation

The Creative Home Delivery Service used five 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 projects.

3.2 Evaluation methods

The following evaluation approaches were used:

Participant wellbeing scores

The 'Well-being Numerical Rating Scale (WB-NRSs)' was used with participants at the beginning and end of each home visit using the following questions and scoring system.

1) How would you rate your overall mental health and wellbeing right now?
   (1 = Low, 5 = Average, 10 = Excellent)
2) How would you rate your mobility?
   (1 = Poor, 5 = OK, 10 = Excellent)

This approach enabled an assessment of the impact made for participants in relation to key outcomes of the project as a result of their engagement in CHDS.

Artist and facilitator reflective diaries

Project artists and facilitators 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 and facilitators also attended a facilitated evaluation session in which they explored key learning from the project and responded to the questions 'What would you do differently?' and 'What worked well?'

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 multiple stake holders. It provides opportunities for the project team 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:

- Staff arranged meetings with, and collected stories from, 6 project participants. These included: 2 participants, 1 artist, 1 facilitator 1 project partner and 1 carer. 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 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.
- Stories were transcribed and edited by the team and the evaluation consultant.
- A panel of 7 people (consisting of project participants, staff, artists and partners) was convened to read and reflect on the stories of change. The group met for three hours on 10th September. Each story was read in turn, with 15 minutes after each reading for panel members to reflect on, and discuss, each 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?
- 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.
- The panel discussions were recorded.

Causal mapping using MSC story transcripts

The project team engaged the services of Causal Map, an organisation that uses Artificial Intelligence to identify causal links between project actions and outcomes. Transcripts of the 6 MSC stories were uploaded to the Causal Map application with unique IDs applied to each MSC interview prompt question (allowing the app to identify each separate question). AI (GPT 4 turbo) was then used to identify each and every causal link and for each link label the cause and effect. A "radical zero-shot" approach was used in which the AI is given no codebook and is simply told to invent its own codes. Context about the project and instructions about acronyms were inputted as follows:

"Later I will give you a text that contains interviews about the Creative Home Delivery Service, an arts and health project to alleviate loneliness and isolation and improve wellbeing through creative arts. Designed and facilitated by People Speak Up, in partnership with the Connecting Carmarthenshire, Carmarthenshire County Council and Hywel Dda Health Board. A PSU facilitator makes weekly visits to the homes of people who are older, lonely and isolated as well as group sessions in two care homes. A creative artist joins the PSU facilitator fortnightly.

We are interested in examples where the interviewees shared narratives changes that happen in the respondents' lives due to the participation in the project.

Bear in mind that:
- PSU means People Speak Up and you can refer to it as PSU
- CHDS means Creative Home Delivery Service and you can refer to it as CHDS
- PSU project and CHDS project are the same thing"

3.3 Data analysis

The causal analysis process identified a set of key causal factors that were emphasised within the stories. Other sources (including artist and facilitator diaries, participant wellbeing scores, MSC stories and MSC panel conversations) were analysed in the light of these themes. Additional themes were also identified from these evidence sources and, together with the causal mapping themes, these provide the headings under which the key findings are laid out (section 6).

Section 4: Participant and session numbers

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

- **187** Home visits were carried out throughout the project
- A total of **34** individual participants received home visits

Section 5: Key findings from the causal mapping exercise

Overall 197 causal links were found to have been made by the respondents.
The sentiment of each link was autocoded in order to show which contributions were
"positive" (blue lines) and which were "negative" (red lines).

5.1 Typical response from one respondent

*"it was nice for someone like Carys to come to me and to say would you like to join our club?
or something. and I joined it and I got into it and that was it." - Participant comment.*

5.2 Top level overview

The AI produced a variety of labels with overlapping meanings and was asked to automatically construct a label for each cluster from all of the respondents. These were used to create a top level overview of the causal connections mentioned by the respondents:
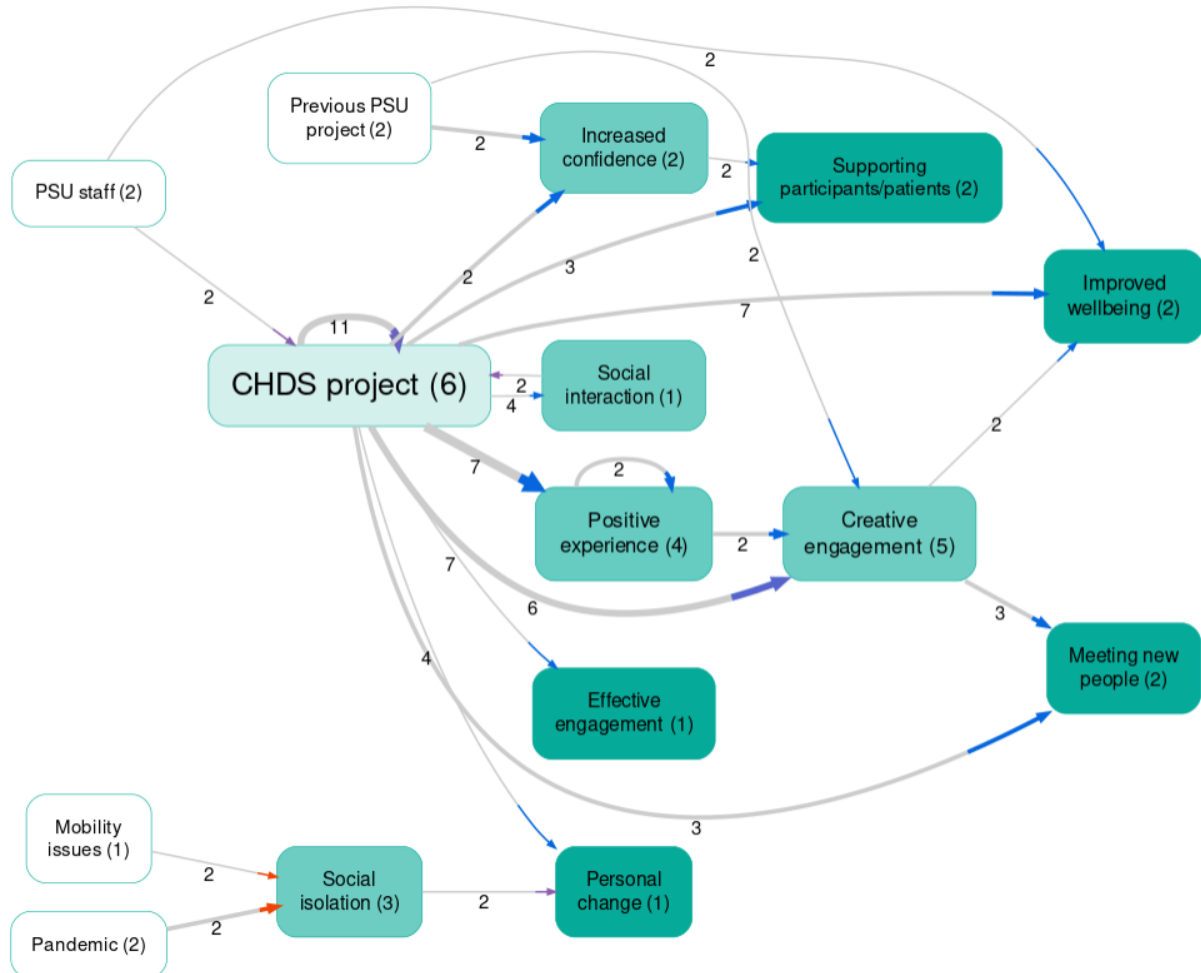
We can see that CHDS project is the most important factor in this map, being mentioned by all of the sources and being responsible for many of the causal chains in the map.
The CHDS project self loop is the most mentioned link and includes factors that led to the involvement or continuation with the project, such as transportation provided by the CHDS allowed for the attendance in elevenses.

5.3 Surprising links

The following map is the same as above, but shows surprising links. This means that the numbers shown on the links in the map indicate which sources mentioned that link surprisingly often, compared to what would be expected based on how frequently different sources mentioned links overall.
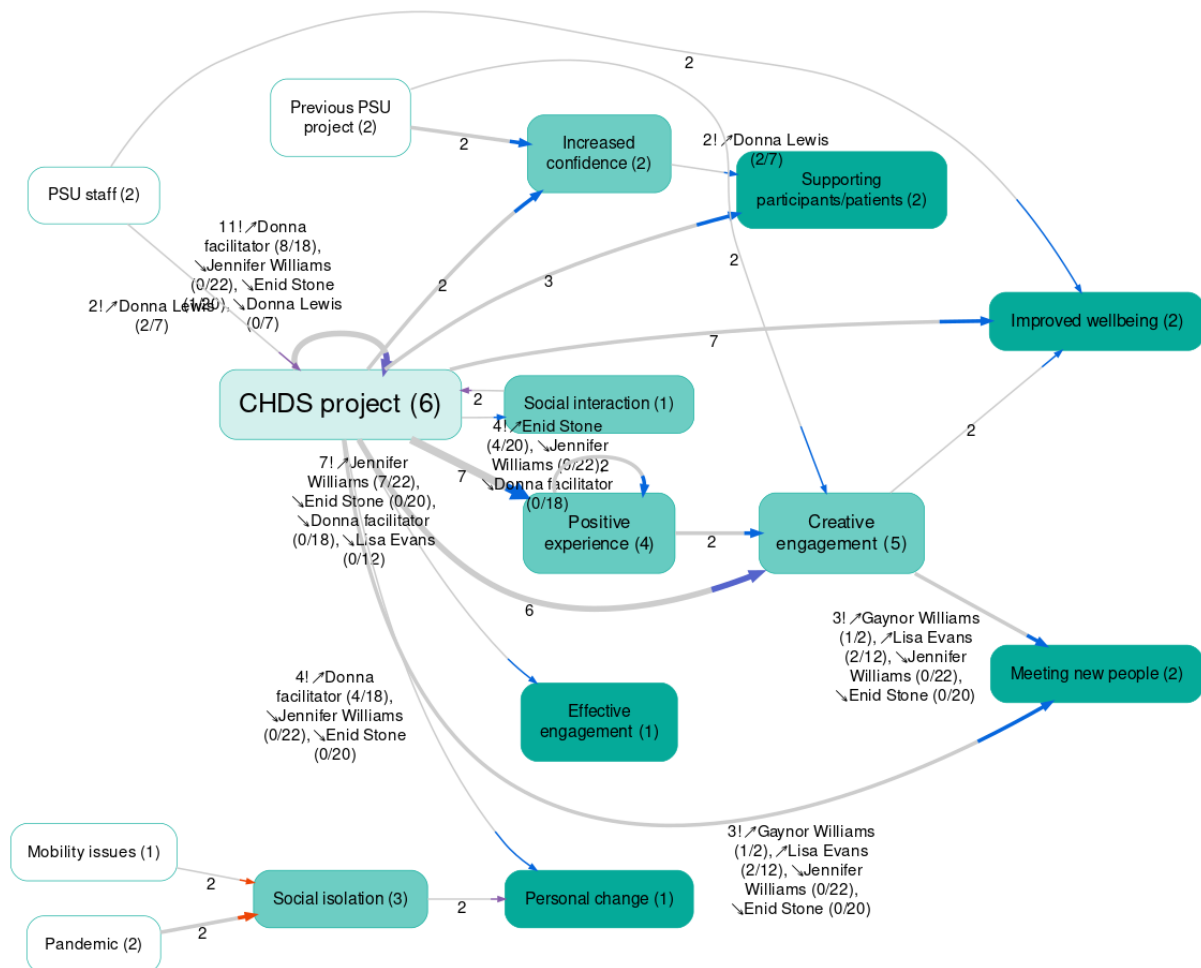
The above graphic can be understood as follows:
- The numbers show how many times each link was cited by different sources.
- The "!" symbol after a number indicates that link was mentioned surprisingly frequently by certain sources.
- The source IDs listed after the "!" show which specific sources mentioned that link more often (↗) or less often (↘) than would be expected statistically.

For example, "11! ↗Donna Facilitator (8/18)" means:
- The link was cited 11 times total
- This was statistically surprising
- 8 of these 11 links (the self loop 'CHDS project') were all from Donna facilitator. (who altogether has 18 citations)

5.4 More detail
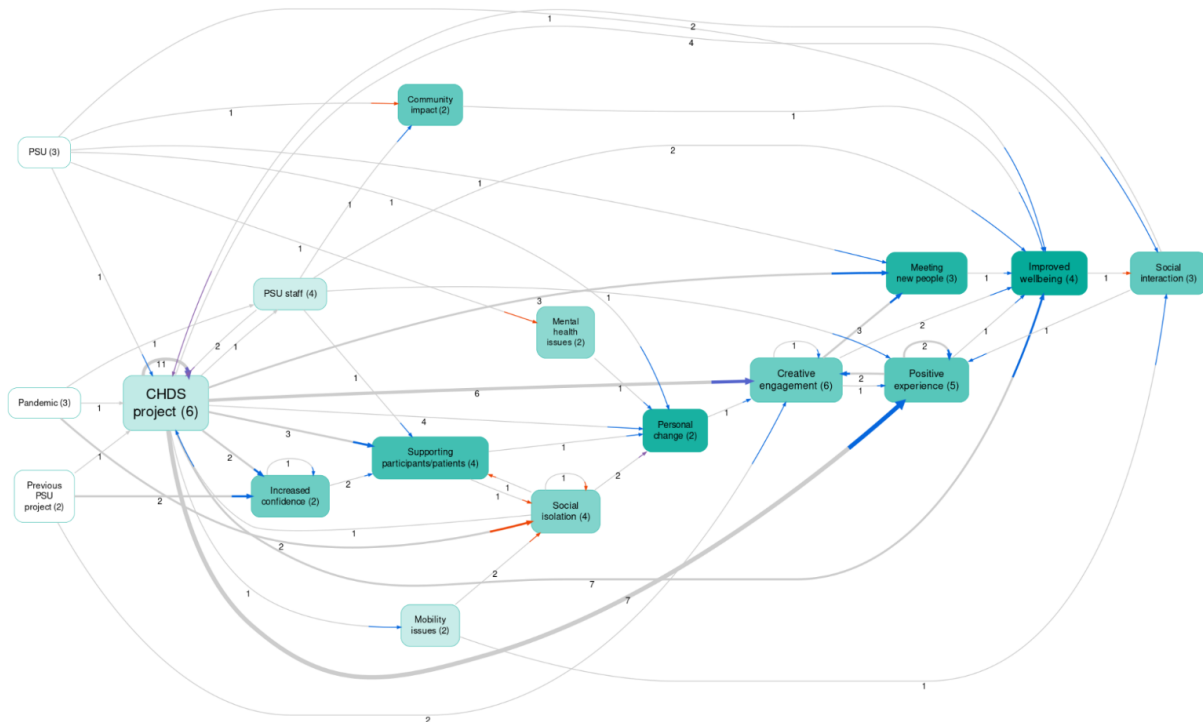
5.5 What is the impact of the project?

The following map traces the threads from the CHDS Project, following complete causal pathways from this specific factor to understand its impacts.
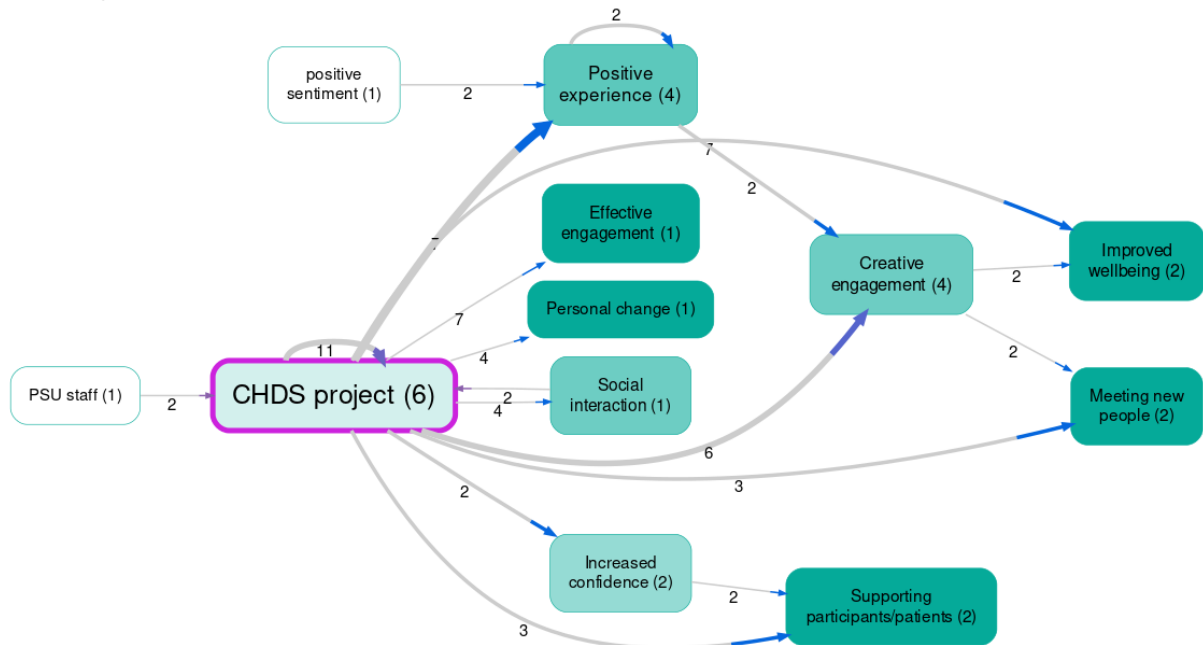
We can see that this map is very similar to the top level map, which means the outcomes seen in the maps are related to inputs by the CHDS project. For example, the CHDS project influenced Creative engagement, which led to Improved wellbeing and Meeting new people. It can also be seen that there are no negative links directly related to the CHDS project outcomes/connections

5.6 15 most mentioned likes

The following table shows which causal claims are mentioned most often by the respondents.

bundle	link_id	source_id
All	All	All
CHDS project / CHDS project	11	3
CHDS project / Effective engagement	7	1
CHDS project / Improved wellbeing	7	2
CHDS project / Positive experience	7	4
CHDS project / Creative engagement	6	3
CHDS project / Personal change	4	1
CHDS project / Social interaction	4	1
CHDS project / Meeting new people	3	2
CHDS project / Supporting participants/patients	3	2
Creative engagement / Meeting new people	3	2
Creative engagement / Improved wellbeing	2	1
Increased confidence / Supporting participants/patients	2	1
Mobility issues / Social isolation	2	1
PSU staff / CHDS project	2	1
PSU staff / Improved wellbeing	2	1

The **bundle** column shows the complete link, bundling the influence and the consequence factors.

The **link_id** column shows the number of times the bundle was mentioned across all of the sources.

The **source_id** column shows the number of sources that mentioned that bundle.

We can see that CHDS appear on all of the 9 most mentioned links and as drivers of outcomes.

Section 6: Key findings from the artist and facilitator reflections, participant wellbeing scores, and MSC panel discussion

The following overview of outcomes and learning from the project uses the key headings that emerged through the causal mapping activity along with additional themes that have emerged through the other evaluation methods. It uses the MSC panel discussion, participant wellbeing scores, and artist and facilitator diaries to dig deeper, evidence outcomes and explore significant learning in relation to these headings and themes.

6.1 Summary of project impact on participant wellbeing

This iteration of the Creative Home Delivery Services builds on, and reinforces, the evidence from previous iterations of the project in relation to the positive impact on social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing. The most mentioned causal links in relation to this theme, as identified by the causal mapping exercise, are: Effective management, creative engagement, social interaction/meeting new people, personal change, positive experience and improved wellbeing.

Social isolation and loneliness continue to feature as key experiences for participants referred to the project, often exacerbated by poor health and physical mobility.

(The particpant) does not have any other family much, just a nephew who lives a long way away, and (participant's) learning disabled son who lives I think in Carmarthen. Friends are fairly far away too, certainly not on the doorstep.' – Artist

'When we asked her what had been on her mind, she explained that it had been physical aches and pains, and then also added that she gets lonely by herself in the days.' – Staff member.

As is familiar from previous evaluations, some participants are reconnecting with previous creative experiences and dusting off old creative skills. This provides easy points of connection for artists and facilitators to explore, along with an opportunity to share memories.

'She has such a rich background in arts and crafts and a good knowledge of artists so that was lovely to listen to.' – Artist

Once again there are many examples of participants sharing the positive impact that engagement with the project has made on their mental health and wellbeing, with some also reporting a positive impact on mobility and physical health.

Participant wellbeing scores

Wellbeing questionnaires measuring the self-reported impact on mental health and mobility were used at the beginning and end of 24 one-to-one sessions.

- **Improved mental health** was reported after **19** of these sessions (**79%**)
- **Improved mobility** was reported after **5** of these sessions (**21%**)

'She explained how much she enjoyed the visits, and how having people come over and see her greatly improves her mental health.' – Staff member.

'Of course you always have someone to talk to in hospital and you see people but when you are stuck in the house on your own, you see nobody, you talk to nobody and it was nice for someone like Carys to come to me and to say "would you like to join our club?" or something. And I joined it and I got into it and that was it.' – Participant MSC story. This participant now attends the Elevensies group every week, supported by PSU with transport. This is the only time she gets out all week.

Despite the numbers of participants self-reporting a positive impact on mobility at the end of a session being significantly lower than for improved mental health, nevertheless a number of stories emerged of increased physical activity and the positive impact of this over the longer term. (Indeed, the lower self-reported numbers might be because this impact is experienced across weeks and months rather than a single session). Artists described incidences in which participants learnt new exercises and movements that they were adopting and practicing between sessions. The MSC panel drew attention to an example of a participant who had built the strength to stand up through these exercises.

'As we progressed through the session (participant) said her body felt looser and more relaxed than usual.' – Artist

'(Participant) expressed that she was feeling muscles she hadn't used for some time. There was a beautiful moment when I invited different movements of our spines…and (participant) raised her eyes and face to the ceiling, a big breath filled her upper chest spontaneously and she looked lighter and brighter! She noticed it too...I recommended she revisit daily a couple of the explorations we did (lightly tapping or squeezing arms and upper legs, and the gentle spinal movements).' – Artist

'She let us know that during the week she has occasionally experimented with doing/remembering some of the moving we'd done together last week.' – Artist

The encouragement and validation that participants receive from artists continues to be a key source of self-esteem and improved wellbeing.

'We have always let her see there is no right or wrong when it comes to art. Hoping this is sinking in! She does sometimes seek validation that what she is doing is OK and we always encourage her that she is.' – Artist

'She had finished her perspective drawing and was quite proud of it, but wanted any constructive criticism she could get, which Bill explained for her.' – Staff member

Beyond this there is ongoing evidence, building on the previous evaluation of the project, that the artists continue to find ways of 'stretching' participants beyond their comfort zones. This provides opportunities for new and invigorating experiences, for a sense of change and personal development and for opportunities for improved confidence and self-image. The MSC panel discussed this issue in relation to age, suggesting that in many traditional care settings expectations of participant capabilities reduce significantly with increased age. In contrast, PSU approach the individual as someone capable of trying something new and beneficial at any age. This opens up opportunities for positive outcomes that are limited in other settings.

‘(Participant) did get a little stressed by how messy it was to use clay, but I think he also really enjoyed it, and the going out of his comfort zone was really good, and at the end he was proud of the work he created.’ – Staff member

‘Sterling (artist) is a pro at finding the balance between encouraging a participant to challenge themselves and not overstepping that line and putting pressure on them.’ – Staff member.

The opportunity to show creative outputs to family and the wider community (both at home and through the project exhibition) add another important opportunity for work to be celebrated and for people to take pride in their achievements.

'Her brother and sister in law visited when she was finished and she was proud of her work she did, showing them.' – Artist

'It was very exciting to know that I was there (at the final project exhibition) and it was a nice crowd. It was full and it was good, yes.' – Participant's MSC story.

Ultimately, the project and its approaches continue to be transformative for some participants, giving them a new lease of life and improving their wellbeing significantly.

'(Participant) was kind and told us many times how life-changing this project has been for her. She explained that she was in a dark place prior to starting this project and it has really been a foundational thing in her getting better, and building herself up.' – Staff member.

Finally, through their evaluation session, the project artists made some suggestions for ways in which the impact of the project might be increased further. These included the creation of a handbook, available on the PSU website, that includes activities provided by all the artists for participants to do in their spare time. (They suggested looking at the '64 million artists' project as a model for this). One artist also mentioned that they have a background in sports coaching (and is a qualified personal trainer) and suggested finding more ways to mix creative elements of the project with physical movements and exercises. The artists also proposed that the legacy of the project could be supported through artist check-ins with participants one month after the final session.

6.2 Development and learning of artists and facilitators

An aspect of project impact and outcomes that became clearer through this evaluation phase relates to both the range of skills practiced by the project team but also the journey of self-discovery and change experienced by artists and facilitators themselves. In some cases this involved a significant change in perspective in relation to the role of the artist and even of creative practice itself.

Creative relational skills continue to be key to the project's success, laying the ground for effective engagement.

'It took a fair bit of Steffan's (facilitator's) charm and gentle positive filtration for her to get a half full version of the narrative.' – Artist

This ongoing relational engagement in turn depends on highly flexible and creative facilitation skills. In practice this involves an ability to gain a quick understanding of 'what makes the participant tick' and what will inspire and motivate them, a willingness to change direction and experiment with different approaches when necessary, and the skill of providing guidance but also of stepping back and giving the participant space to experiment and grow.

'We looked at a book together – "Women Holding Things". We…talked about some of the paintings until we found one that (participant) felt she resonated with, titled "Woman in my dream walking through almond blossom holding a giant bolder". (Participant) talked about weight/carrying/limitation/obstacles, about days when she has strength to find different ways around things, and days when she doesn't.'

'(Participant) said she wasn't feeling the clay which I said is more than fine…We tried out some printmaking - monoprinting and using flowers and shrubs to explore pattern. She seemed to really enjoy this process and we talked about ways she could incorporate this into her card making.' – Artist.

'She likes to be guided and then I leave her to it, and guide her when she needs it.' - Artist

This approach to facilitation involves a broad and flexible interpretation of 'creative activity' and an ability to develop activities that are integrated into the person's circumstances, experiences and home environment. Some artists have developed a particular knack for incorporating physical movement into their sessions, supporting the outcomes related to physical health described above.

'(Participant) let us know that when she wakes in the night she thinks about all the things she would like to do the next day, yet when she wakes in the morning she feels tired and has lost the will to do any of these things. When asked, she said these things are to do with being able to polish and clean the house…and tend her garden. We suggested that if she'd like some company and help with these things we could find some creative ways for some of our sessions to include them…it is all movement!' – Artist

'We interspersed sharing stories (childhood, mothers, gardens), with some simple seated movement.'- Artist.

Indeed, project artists bring a diverse range of skills with them, not just in relation to the arts. These skills are often brought into play naturally due to the flexible, organic and relational processes described above. Nevertheless, a skills audit conducted with artists and facilitators might open up new and more conscious ways of making the most of these unique abilities within the project.

I am wondering about taking a gentle oil or cream to suggest a hand massage at the end of the session…She has some arthritis in her fingers and this could help, would bring in some of my skills from Shiatsu.' – Artist

As noted above, for some artists and facilitators their experiences on the project have transformed the way they perceive themselves, their role as artists and the role and purpose

of 'the arts'. These conclusions centre on the insight that the facilitation process and associated relationships are themselves a creative process fully integrated with activities that create more 'traditional' creative output. This adds a new dimension of meaning and purpose to the work and can open up new ways of thinking about future career direction and focus.

'I think back to when I was in uni and that thing of like, 'I just want to be an artist', but what does that even mean? I think at the time I was just thinking of - I want to exhibit, and I want to be this successful artist. I think, because I'm now kind of more of a facilitator practitioner, I see that now as my practice, as my actual making as well as just actually physically making a piece of work.' – Artist MSC story.

Ultimately the facilitation approach developed by the artists and facilitators involves a deep respect for, and connection with, the participant and their storied lives, and an ability to identify, celebrate and nurture a sometimes latent strength of character and spirit. Artists talked about the work in terms of 'accepting reality and impermanence' and 'learning to care more deeply'. The MSC panel described the approach as 'soul medicine' and identified the opportunity for creative activity and exploration as central to this. They contrasted this approach with more traditional clinical approaches to care.

There are moments when with Heather that the images of her as a child and younger woman come through strongly. I'm making some notes, writing a little, after each visit. The spirit of this resilient, yet presently fragile, woman living through nearly 100 years on this earth is extraordinary. These are stories to tell, even if in fragments.' – Artist.

In sharing their MSC stories, artists described their own struggles with mental health challenges and the role that creative activities and artistic engagement played in their own healing, reconnection and development. This lived experience forms a foundation for the empathy described above and helps create relationships of honesty that embrace and build on shared vulnerability. The MSC panel was impressed by the level of self-reflection and learning embraced by the artists that underpins the success of the relationships and supports the outcomes of the project.

In relation to this, the MSC panel discussed the importance of staff wellbeing in the context of the quite intense conversations and experiences shared by artists and facilitators. The artists' own creative practices were seen as important in helping them process this but so were opportunities for peer support and for wellbeing coaching provided by PSU. The panel acknowledged the need for the team to have time for reflection. During the artists' evaluation session a suggestion was made to establish *'peer check-ins - a zoom set up for artists to join for peer supervision and support'.*

6.3 Partnerships and co-production.

The role of the staff team in enabling the change experienced by participants described in the MSC stories was identified as one of the most mentioned causal links. In turn, the artists, facilitators and participants operate within a context of wider relationships that draw in a range of skills and knowledge that support a highly co-productive approach. This network of relationships and the co-production they enable have emerged as key success factors during this evaluation.

These relationships start with, and are rooted in, the team of the participant, artist and facilitator. They develop over time, using the creative and flexible facilitation approaches described above and they provide a secure basis for the delivery of wellbeing outcomes. The creative sessions provide opportunities to share stories and experiences and to listen. This leads to empathy and also personal self-understanding and growth for both the participant and artists, as already highlighted. It allows for exploration of 'the big questions' such as 'who am I?', 'What is life about?' and 'How can I live it well?' that are described by one of the artists in their MSC story.

'I was fine visiting (participant) on my own, it is different though, the opportunity for the three-way conversation and involvement in activities is also useful.' – Artist

'(Participant), Sam (artist) and I are a good team I think. We all get along really well, and the energy in the room is very relaxed, humorous and gentle. We have spent quite a bit of time together now as this paring and there is a continued ease and earned flow as we are basically friends at this point.' – Staff member.

Beyond this core team of participant, artist and facilitator, people connected to the participant are drawn into the project and its outcomes. Previous evaluations have highlighted the positive impact on family members and on family relationships. This evaluation has particularly identified the role of cares in co-producing wellbeing outcomes by providing important knowledge and insights into the participant's wider circumstances. This allows bespoke effective approaches to be co-designed and allows carers to support participants using techniques developed during the sessions.

'(Carer) let me know that (facilitator) has back pain in both sides, related to kidney failure. She encouraged me to focus on arms and legs as (participant) moving her core can cause pain.' – Artist

'Through joining in with us (carer) could see the benefit and accessibility of the moving we have been doing with the small physio ball. She was keen to find somewhere to buy one while I was there so I directed her to a website.' – Artist

'Then she gently starts… 'Well, shall we do a little bit of movement' you know, and she gradually goes into doing a bit of that. And my mother is good at doing it. She listens to Sterling whereas I can't get her to do it for me and that's a huge benefit of it.' – Carer's MSC story.

Moving out beyond the artist, facilitator, participant, family and carers, the MSC panel identified project partners as another key part of the co-production 'mix', describing the role of a social prescriber in building trust with participants and then supporting their access to the project and other activities. In their MSC story the social prescriber described seeing the impact of the project on the participant and therefore growing trust in the service. This, in turn, helped them build confidence in their own role, providing their own benefits from engagement in the project. These relationships with partners are crucial, take time and effort to develop, and are currently stronger with some organisations than others. The MSC panel described all project collaborators (participants, artists, carers and partners) as being on a journey together – everyone is learning from the approach and from each other.

During their evaluation session the artists had plenty to say about how co-production can be promoted within the project, including the information needed and what relational groundwork needs to take place to support the co-production approach towards the beginning of the project:

'More info from carers / family before starting with participant.' – Artist evaluation session.
'Participants to receive more info on the artists – once their info is uploaded to our website then PSU can signpost to look at that for further info.' – Artist evaluation session.

'Connect participants to each other. They can relate to and support each other if going through certain things such as disability and loneliness and go on the creative journey together. Weekly group catch up (online, phone etc.) if they want.' – Artist evaluation session.

'Mix the artists so multiple artists working together – multidisciplinary.' – Artist evaluation session.

The MSC panel felt that, given the network of relationships within which the project exists, there could be more referral of participants into other opportunities supported and led by partners. This may be a key tool in supporting effective follow on and legacy activity for participants beyond the end of the visits.

Finally, the panel saw the potential for the development of unique training for artists based on the PSU model, bringing together creative practice with co-production skills and approaching facilitation as a creative practice in its own right.

6.4 Impact on 'significant others'

Beyond the knowledge and insights that carers, family and other 'significant others' bring as co-producers in the process (see above), the MSC panel also discussed the positive impact the project has for these people themselves. In particular during this phase of the evaluation, strong evidence emerged of the difference the project makes for unpaid carers.

'(Participant) was very thankful for our time today as was her daughter (Carer) who spoke to us about how much she thinks this project does for individuals living at home receiving care.' – Staff member.

In particular, carers described the relief and peace of mind experienced knowing that their loved ones are in 'safe hands'. This allows them to meet a crucial personal need by taking a break for their own wellbeing and recuperation. In the past this has been impossible or has induced guilt.

'Peace of mind, my own personal well-being, being able to go out for that hour while I'm down here, not necessarily always doing the shopping but doing something totally different, you know, to have a break from it. Yes, it's helped me an awful lot.' – Carer's MSC story

In addition, carers felt that the project meets a vital need by providing opportunities for participants to engage with different people and to broaden their relationships and experience of the world beyond the carers themselves (who are often the only people participants spend time with). This reduces the pressure on carers to provide all the participant's emotional, physical and intellectual needs.

'She needs conversation to stimulate her, away from me because with me it's just family chat and she needs that outside influence really, of people discussing other things in the world you know.' – Carer's MSC story

6.5 Organisational culture

As identified in previous project evaluations, the unique organisational culture found in PSU is crucial in supporting project delivery and the successful delivery of outcomes. Partners shared that the organisation communicates effectively, responding to requests for information or support in a timely manner and seeking to be helpful wherever possible. The MSC panel identified that PSU holds an 'open door' for partners to come and work with them

'People at People Speak Up were really, really approachable. On phoning them, they'd always get back to you and with email straight back to me.' – Social Prescriber MSC story.

The type of relationships that are central to PSU's approach, and that staff are encouraged to pursue, are different from those often found in traditional service delivery type settings. There is a culture of friendship and accompaniment, along with a sense of equality between staff and participants. Nevertheless safeguarding is taken seriously and appropriate boundaries maintained to ensure participant and staff safety and wellbeing. The negotiation of this space is a particular strength of the organisation.

'She really enjoyed going to the nurture centre the day before. She was chatting about Steffan and Kris and how they take her to the nurture centre. It is making a real difference to her.' – Artist

'That's why we use the arts, it's just an excuse to get people chatting really! It's all about the chatting, the making the teas and the coffees and the friendships.' – MSC panel member.

The way PSU approach, manage and support project artists is seen as crucial to the development and maintenance of this culture. Artists are engaged as creative agents who have a major contribution to the design and delivery of the project. Significant effort is made to provide structural support for artists to experience their own journeys for their own holistic personal and professional development.

'I am grateful for our voices to be heard as artists, there's not many projects that do this.' – Artist evaluation session.

PSU's active long term presence in a particular community allows them to be a creative hub that provides consistency for people through the provision of a weekly programme of activities and projects in a particular, identifiable and accessible place. The nurturing relationships within this context mean that PSU are able to support participants into new experiences, including through their own portfolio of projects. The organisation's well established network of partners allows them to facilitate access to further additional opportunities elsewhere.

'Well, it was nice to see them and get to know them you know? And now I know about the art group so if I go to the class, somebody is there that I know.' – Participant MSC story

'We are trying to encourage her to venture out and try a local art group….' – Artist

In fact, the flexible use of multiple spaces, formal and informal (including the centre, people's homes, residential homes etc) provides opportunities for new and different experiences and increased wellbeing, while the centre provides a consistent place where people can continue to engage and connect beyond individual project timescales.

'The fact that she went outside to do crafts in the garden, just changing her environment, cos if they're sitting in the house all day…just going and sitting in the garden can help your wellbeing so much, you know?' – MSC panel member

Nevertheless, while the long term presence of PSU in their community provides some consistency for participants and local community members, short term funding of projects and the associated limitations still create challenges in providing consistent support for people.

'We left her very grateful for the sessions but also very unhappy that they were ending…' – Artist

The MSC panel discussed the difficulties in ensuring everyone knows about PSU and their work, particularly professionals. Partly this is due to the high turnover of staff in the public sector (which makes communication and awareness raising an ongoing challenge). The proliferation of new community networks is helping with this.

Ultimately, whilst it's possible to analyse and identify aspects of organizational culture that support highly effective delivery, this still doesn't capture the unique nature of the atmosphere at PSU or explain people's deep connection to, and love for, the place. Appropriately to such a creative space, participants and staff will often reach for metaphors or more emotional concepts to describe the organisation.

'There's a weird magic to People Speak Up where it, like, it's more than the sum of its parts. When you say, like, 'arts, health and wellbeing' it doesn't really, like… even though all those words are important to all of us, it doesn't sound like anything. But then if you actually come in and see what it does for people. You know, you meet people who are like 'do you know what, I was actually going to kill myself then I came in here and I started coming to this group and ow I have a community, and I have friends, and I have a reason to get up in the morning'. And you're just, like, 'wow, that's so powerful and amazing.'' – Facilitator MSC story.

6.6 Impact and learning from the MSC approach

The MSC panel were grateful that story tellers were willing to share their stories and to open up about their vulnerabilities. The approach enables a range of stakeholders including participants, staff and partners to be involved in drawing detailed and complex learning from the project. It was felt that MSC helps to 'get to the heart of the matter' and to engage with some of the more emotional and spiritual aspects of what happens through the project, how the relationships work and what creates change. The MSC panel also discussed the way in which the process uncovers and captures the 'people led' nature of the work (in a way that numbers or 'tick box' type exercises do not).

During this iteration of the CHDS project the process has enabled an even wider set of voices to be heard from across the project, centering the experience of carers and a social prescriber.

The MSC panel drew the conclusion that narrative based approaches to evaluation should be used, embraced and celebrated alongside quantitative approaches in all aspects of PSUs work.

One of the artists commented on the challenges of using the project wellbeing questionnaires with participants, stating that *'Training (is) needed on using the numerical questionnaires in a creative way, reframing how we ask the questions so it's not too direct. Not good feedback from participants answering these numerical questionnaires as (it) feels medical to them.'* Perhaps the ethos and some of the approaches of MSC can be used to redesign this experience with artists and participants?

6.7 Other issues and findings

The MSC panel discussed the importance of the approach used by PSU and its significance for wellbeing in communities (including its uniqueness in comparison to other projects). There is a strong belief that this kind of provision is essential and should be available for all communities, and that this would involve the growth and flourishing of independent community based organisations elsewhere (rather than a co-opted state attempt). Recognition of this by local and national government, along with more sustainable and consistent funding models to support this agenda, is seen as crucial.

'So I think, People Speak Up, it's super important and I think it's like, everyone should have somewhere like this to go. And it's really sad that there's not, like, you know… You don't want it to be state versions of this but you do want, like, this should be for everybody.' – Facilitator MSC story.

'Longer project – bed bound, and house bound people would benefit more from this.' – Artist evaluation session.

Both panel sub groups discussed the issue of transport and the challenges of people reaching and accessing the centre. This is a key source of ongoing social isolation. While staff often tell stories of picking participants up and providing lifts to the centre, they also mentioned that there are 'transport waiting lists' for these 'services'. There may be the need and some scope for a more organised approach to transport provision – maybe a community transport project in partnership with other local organisations?

'Go more rural, getting the word out there via word of mouth.' – Artist evaluation session

Section 7: The 'most significant stories'

The panel chose two 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 summarised for each. *Edited versions of both stories are included in the appendix.*

7.1 Story 1 – Donna (Creative Facilitator)

The panel felt that Donna's journey, including the personal hurdles she's overcome and the distance she's travelled, was significant. They admired her honesty and willingness to share personal experiences. It was noted that a number of PSU staff share similar journeys that involve struggles with their own mental health, discovery of the supportive role creative activity can take, involvement as volunteers and then employment as staff.   It was felt that these 'lived experiences' enable a particular kind of empathy and connection with participants. It was also acknowledged that this demonstrates a need to 'help ourselves before we can help others.' It is the supportive culture and practice for artists and facilitators within the organisation that has enabled the growth and impact of this lived experience.

The panel particularly liked the notion of 'tending to people's souls' that was described within the story, in contrast to a more traditional and clinical model. It was felt that this allows for engagement with 'the whole person' and thus for more positive and 'strength' based interactions.

'The difference with this project (is) - If I was just going to someone's house and assessing their physical wellbeing, there's like a clinical side to it, you know, where I'm like, filling in a form and saying 'well they can move around today, they've eaten today, they've slept today, they've taken their medication.' That's not what we're doing. We're going in there to sort of, like, assess how their soul is doing in a way!'' – Donna

7.2 Story 2 – Jennifer (Carer of participant)

The panel felt that the story captured the journey of the story-teller as a carer and family member along with the journey of the participant, but also of her relationship with PSU which has involved a level of trust towards an organisation that she has only recently begun to get to know. The story-teller has benefitted greatly from the project, not least because she now feels able to leave her daughter in safe hands. The panel discussed the significance of this for carers, many of whom describe feeling guilty about taking time out for themselves.

It was felt that the story captures the 'bigger, wider picture'. The panel described this as a 'ripple effect', with the benefits of the project rippling out beyond the participant to family members, carers and the wider community. They also noted that, even though the participant is 99, the referral was still accepted and that she has even been engaged in gentle physical exercise. This is significant when 'a lot of people come to an age when they think 'Oh, I don't need to do that, I can just sit in a chair all day.'' It was felt to be important that the team were able to motivate her to continue this exercise, even when she was unwilling to respond to requests from family.

The panel discussed the implications of choosing facilitator and carer stories rather than participant stories (given that the focus of project work tends to be on supporting change for participants). However, they felt these stories captured a key learning from the evaluation of this iteration of the project – the significance of the 'ripple effect' described above, the impact

of the project on people in a widening circle beyond the participant themselves. It is essential to capture and describe these outcomes in order to understand the full impact of the project and to distinguish the approaches used from traditional methods that focus solely on the participant in isolation from their wider networks of family and support.

Section 8: Summary of findings and recommendations

The following is a summary of the key findings and recommendations from across the Creative Home Delivery Service project evaluation.

8.1 Project impact on participant wellbeing

Social isolation and loneliness were a key feature of life for many participants in the project. Benefits to mental health and wellbeing were reported by participants, carers and artists and the key causal links to these outcomes were effective management, creative engagement, social interaction, personal change and positive experience. There is evidence that some participants gained improvements to mobility and physical health as a result of dance and movement focused activities integrated into the delivery. This change was aided by the provision of activities that could be adopted and practiced throughout the week (between sessions). The relationship of the participant with the artist, and the encouragement and gentle challenge they received from them, along with the opportunity to show, celebrate and take pride in artistic outputs, all contributed to improved wellbeing. For some participants, engagement in the project is life-changing.

Recommendations:

The project artists made the following suggestions for increasing the impact on mental health and wellbeing:

- Creation of a handbook, available on the PSU website, that includes activities provided by the artists that participants can do in their own time.
- Development of further opportunities to mix creative elements of the project with physical movement and exercise.
- The addition of artist check-ins with participants one month after the final session, to support legacy planning and benefits.

8.2 Development and learning of artists and facilitators

The role of the artist continues to be crucial to the success of the project. The range of skills required includes: the ability to form trusting relationships, flexible and creative facilitation skills, empathy and understanding, and the ability to balance guidance and support with the space for autonomy and personal growth. Some artists bring their own unique additional abilities, for example facilitation of physical and movement activities. Many of the artists themselves share a 'lived experience' of mental health challenges and the positive impact that creative activity has made on their lives. These experiences provide an opportunity for a deeper and more empathetic connection with the participant forged on shared vulnerability. The ability of the project to open up space for reflection on memory, feelings, hopes and fears was described by the MSC panel as 'soul medicine', in contrast to the more clinical approaches taken in traditional care settings. For some artists, their experience of the project has transformed their understanding of their own artistic practice and career priorities as they have begun to embrace relationships and facilitation as key creative tasks in their own right. Given the complex and sensitive nature of the artists' experience on the project, effective support for their wellbeing was seen by the MSC panel as crucial.

Recommendations:

- A skills audit, conducted with the artists at the beginning of the project, would enable the active identification of 'additional skills' that might be brought into play to benefit the project. (For example, the physical health benefits some participants experienced were largely due to the particular experience and skills of one artist).
- The range of opportunities developed for staff support remain important (including the personal wellbeing coaching). During the Artists' evaluation session a suggestion was made to establish online 'peer check-ins' to enable mutual support.

8.3 Partnerships and co-production

The participant, artist and facilitator 'team' provides the solid basis for project delivery and impact, and also for wider co-productive relationships with family members, carers and organisational partners. The particular relational knowledge and insight that carers bring to the table is a crucial part of the 'co-production jigsaw' allowing bespoke approaches to be designed according to need. Carers also make an important contribution by encouraging the participant to try new experiences (including between sessions) and by celebrating artistic outputs. Project partners are increasingly being drawn meaningfully into the co-production 'journey', building their own relationship with the project and increasing their own confidence in engagement. During their evaluation session the artists made some recommendations for how co-production could be strengthened by collecting and sharing more information at the beginning of the project (for example between artists and participants/carers) and by connecting participants to each other and artists to each other more effectively. These suggestions for increasing connections are fully in keeping with the relational and co-productive nature of the project. The MSC panel identified the potential for increased referral opportunities through partners and also saw the potential to develop specialist training for artists that brings together creative practice with co-production skills and facilitation.

Recommendations:

- Information should be collected from participants and carers and shared with artists before the first visit. Useful information that would help artists and facilitators prepare might include previous hobbies, interests, hopes, fears and accessibility issues.
- Similarly, information about the artist should be made available to the participant before the first visit.
- Opportunities should be explored to connect participants with each other for mutual friendship and support, building on the opportunities that already exist for face-to-face and online group sessions. One artist suggested that this could take the form of a weekly online group catch up.
- A more multidisciplinary team approach could be taken by mixing up artists and encouraging them to work together.
- New opportunities for referring participants for additional and/or follow up support could be explored with project partners. This could be used to create a referral map made available to the project team and partners.
- PSU should explore working with others to design and offer a unique 'creative co-production' training offer that combines creative practice, co-production and creative facilitation.

8.4 Impact on 'significant others'

In addition to the impact on participants, the project has also supported significantly improved wellbeing amongst carers of participants. They described increased peace of mind associated with the knowledge that their loved ones are 'in safe hands' and are receiving opportunities to build new relationships and receive new experiences. They described a reduction in feelings of guilt and of pressure to provide all the participant's emotional, physical and intellectual needs.

Recommendations:

- More information emerged about carer experiences of the project during this evaluation phase, largely due to the collection of a carer's MSC story. However, more targeted evaluation could be used in future project iterations in order to measure and understand the impact on carers more fully.
- So far carers are engaged secondarily through participants (as a byproduct of the relationship with the participant). PSU should explore the potential of targeting services and activities directly to unpaid carers, perhaps in partnership with an organisation that works directly with them already.

8.5 Organisational culture

The organisational culture of PSU continues to be central to its success. In addition to the usual standards of professionalism one might expect (effective communication, a quick response to requests for information and a helpful attitude) the organisation puts a particular type of relationship at the centre of the work. These relationships are characterised by equality, friendship and a spirit of accompaniment. In particular, the way that artists on the project are supported and engaged as creative assets and co-creators who are being supported in their own personal and professional journeys is unique.

PSU's long term physical presence in a particular community, alongside the portfolio of projects it delivers, enables consistency and stability along with the opportunity to support participants into new experiences. Nevertheless, challenges remain in maintaining this consistency in an environment of short term funding. The MSC panel discussed the difficulties in ensuring potential stakeholders are aware of the organisation.

Recommendation:

- The emergence of new networks of collaboration locally, regionally and nationally is creating opportunities to publicise PSU's work more widely. Given the resource limitations, the organisation should approach this strategically within the context of a wider communications and networking strategy.

8.6 Impact and learning from the MSC approach

The MSC approach enabled a range of stakeholders including participants, staff and partners to be involved in evaluating and learning from the project. The use of stories allows the team to dig deep, exploring the relational, emotional and spiritual aspects of change associated with the project. This iteration of the project has included an even wider set of stakeholders than previously, allowing the team to explore the voices of carers and partners in addition to participants and staff. The MSC panel agreed that narrative approaches to evaluation should be used alongside quantitative approaches in all aspects of PSU's work.

Recommendation:

- Future MSC evaluations should seek to uncover other unheard voices within or related to the project. This could include policy makers, local politicians and funders. This could happen through story collection and/or panel participation.
- PSU should explore the use of MSC in other areas of the organisation and other projects.

8.7 Other issues and findings

The MSC panel agreed that the evaluation has demonstrated a number of ways in which the PSU approach is unique and ground breaking. They shared a belief that all communities should be able to benefit from similar projects. Well established and consistently funded community led organisations like PSU are crucial to this vision, along with recognition and support from power and resource holders including local and national government.

The panel also discussed the barriers to participation caused by transport difficulties, especially for people more distant from the centre, with this preventing the futher geographical reach and impact of the organisation. Staff are sometimes able to offer lifts to participants but there is already a waiting list for this informal 'service'. There may be scope for a more organised approach to transport provision.

Recommendations:

- PSU should join with other organisations regionally and nationally to advocate for community led responses to wellbeing needs and for sustainable funding models and government support.
- The organisation should look into models of community transport provision and explore the possibility of a similar project with community partners.

Section 9: Appendix – The two 'most significant stories'

The following two 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 both story-tellers to share their stories.

9.1 Story 1

Story-teller: Donna
Role: Creative Facilitator
Story collector: Dave Horton

Could you tell us a bit about yourself and what life was like before you got involved in the Creative Home Delivery Service project?

OK, well I've been working for People Speak Up since lockdown. I think I was always interested in visual art and writing but I hadn't done any for a long time, due to a really bad period of mental health over about ten years. When I started to come back in here, I started to get involved in writing again, painting, and then everyone was super complimentary about my art – they were like, 'no, Donna, you can do this!' So I was like 'Oh, Awesome!'

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

OK, so when I became Creative Facilitator I was assigned to the CHDS project. I wasn't in the second one (but) I went back into the project (for the third one).

I was super excited to get involved because I thought it was a really good opportunity for me to shadow some cool artists. So I was hoping, you know, that I would upskill a little or just, like, learn what people were doing who aspire to be freelancing in the field. I wanted to allow people to talk to you and to have that contact because a lot of the people we visit are very, like, you know, they don't see anybody, they don't have anyone to talk to really.

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

The thing that I have found, for example when we were visiting…people who are bed bound, or people who, you know, they don't get out. They're obviously in a later 'quadrant' than my own. But what I found, when I went to visit them, it made me appreciate my own life. I was imagining that I was in that stage myself, you know, what would be important to me, and what would I want to be talking about, and where would I want to be at that stage myself? It made me very introspective about what the important things are in life. What do you carry forward when maybe you don't have people around you? What is the essence of who you are that you'd carry on? And how does art help people do that, you know?

It sounds like quite an empathetic way of working with people – thinking yourself into this situation. How did this change the way you work with people?

The difference with this project (is) - If I was just going to someone's house and assessing their physical wellbeing, there's like a clinical side to it, you know, where I'm like, filling in a form and saying 'well they can move around today, they've eaten today, they've slept today,

they've taken their medication.' That's not what we're doing. We're going in there to sort of, like, assess how their soul is doing in a way!' Or, like, to make them feel good in a way that is not clinical, and that's, like, super amazing and magical in a way.

I think, it's, like, a beautiful thing to see the resilience of people who don't have their health…But they have this awesome, like, incandescent spirit that they can keep going.

What caused this change?

I don't hang out with older people maybe that much. The people I interact with on a daily basis maybe don't have the challenges that some of the participants have, so I think…you know, you go to the house and you think 'they spend, like, all their time here. What must that be like?' So you start to, like, empathise with them and think 'well, how would I feel in this situation?' or 'what would I want to get out of this interaction then, in that case?'

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

There's a weird magic to People Speak Up where it, like, it's more than the sum of its parts. When you say, like, 'arts, health and wellbeing' it doesn't sound like anything. But then if you actually come in and see what it does for people. You meet people who are like 'do you know what, I was actually going to kill myself then I came in here and I started coming to this group and now I have a community, and I have friends, and I have a reason to get up in the morning'. And you're just, like, 'wow, that's so powerful and amazing.' So I think, People Speak Up, it's super important and I think it's like, everyone should have somewhere like this to go. And it's really sad that there's not, like, you know… You don't want it to be state versions of this but you do want, like, this should be for everybody.

What title would you give your story?

I don't know, maybe something like 'learning to see', or something like that. It's the process of opening your eyes, or discovering things. Yeah, something like that.

9.2 Story 2

Story-teller: Jennifer Williams
Role: Carer of participant
Story collector: Steffan Thomas

Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and what life was like before you got involved in the Creative Home Delivery Service Project?

Well, I started looking after my mother after my dad passed away because she wasn't very mobile. Back then I was only coming down for one day and in my spare time I used to show my dogs. Now, since my mother…has deteriorated age-wise, I have had to put that to one side, so I no longer show my dogs…but it's a sacrifice I am prepared to make because my mother comes first. She had a few falls…so I come down regularly now on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays so I can do all her shopping and get her medication and everything else she needs really. So, life has changed pretty dramatically, but the intervention of People Speak Up has made a massive difference for me.

How did you first get involved in the project?

I think it might have been one of the carers, way, way back that had heard of your organisation and I got in touch with you through her recommendation and it was the best thing I ever did, by a long way.

What did you hope might happen as a result of getting involved?

Different conversations for my mother because it's only me that she talks to, other than obviously the carers as they come in but they don't have time to sit and chat, you know. So she needs conversation to stimulate her, away from me because with me it's just family chat and she needs that outside influence really, of people discussing other things in the world you know. I think it's been a huge turning point for her really because she got very, very depressed being on her own all the time. But having somebody coming from People Speak Up has really helped her an awful lot, an awful lot.

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

Peace of mind, my own personal well-being, being able to go out for that hour while I'm down here, not necessarily always doing the shopping but doing something totally different, you know, to have a break from it. Yes, it's helped me an awful lot.

I have seen photos of (participant) exercising with a blow-up ball and dancing to music! She also made a Pavarotti poster/collage.

It's up on the mirror now and she looks at that every day and she mentions it to everyone every single day. She is proud of it. That's been a joy for her, having that there, a real joy. Because she adores Pavarotti.

I mean she (Sterling) comes in, she brings in flowers from her garden, for mum every week, gets her to smell them. She sits down opposite mam and starts with some songs from the war era and then she gently starts… 'Well, shall we do a little bit of movement' you know,

and she gradually goes into doing a bit of that. And my mother is good at doing it. She listens to Sterling whereas I can't get her to do it for me and that's a huge benefit of it. She enjoys doing a bit of exercise, because if we can keep her arms going, it'll help her lifting herself out of the chair, you know, and that is as much as we can expect really you know, she is 99 after all and is doing amazing for that.

What caused this change?

Having somebody here with my mother. I mean definitely. And knowing that she was comfortable with who was here, you know? I mean I could just go out knowing that she was in safe hands. Continuity for her (helps) - the same people come again and so on. Yeah, that makes a massive difference because she said she can never remember names but she does know the faces.

What title would you give your story?

How to achieve peace of mind.
I think that suits, because it has achieved peace of mind for me. I've no doubt about that. I didn't have peace of mind before, because every time I would go out, I would be thinking, 'oh, what is she doing now? Is she likely to fall?'.