

Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire Impact Report 2021-23

"Every artist was first an amateur"

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Chief Executive Foreword

First, we would like to thank commissioners Tanya Khera-Butler, Kate Sahota, and Asmaa Ahmedabadi for their support, encouragement, and understanding of the extraordinary challenges we faced in the delivery of this Art for Wellbeing programme. We are immensely grateful for the trust Warwickshire County Council placed in us and we are equally immensely proud of our staff team who gave it their all to make it a success.

It is important to recall that we launched the programme on 1st of January 2021 during the second lockdown, which were very difficult times when social distancing measures were in place and most services were shut. Under these unprecedented circumstances we were tasked to engage isolated adults across Warwickshire in creative mental health learning where participants could feel safe and bridge the social isolation imposed by the pandemic.

Covid-19 dictated how we delivered the programme, how we reached participants, choice of premises, activities we could deliver and even what materials we could use. The Internet saved the day and enabled us to run activities online but added another dimension of complexity. To enable participants attend, our staff had to first assess participants digital capabilities and then teach digital skills 1:1 over the phone. Also, participants were posted an art pack before course start which often did not arrive in time, and our staff team stepped in and drove around Warwickshire deep into the night to deliver art packs by hand.

The pandemic put more than one spanner in our work but our team responded swiftly, driven by a passion to make a difference to people's lives. School teachers, workers on furlough, parents and carers, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and retirees met at our courses to learn and experience how the creative process supports mental wellbeing. During workshops participants shared their worst fears and devastating losses of health and loved ones, their confusions about identity and purpose in life, their shattered hopes, dreams, and ambitions.

And yet, through all the hardship, this report highlights how Art for Wellbeing courses enabled participants to find solace in each other's company, empowered them to step away from daily pressures and take time to self-care, and through their creativity experience a sense of achievement, beauty, and joy in the midst of dark times.

Extensive data underpins this evaluation but we want to draw your attention to participants feedback and short case studies you will find on every page. These paint a far more vivid and colourful picture of their immeasurable experiences and the vital role Art for Wellbeing played in their lives.

Lorella Medici
Chief Executive Officer



2021 Warwickshire County Council commissioned a suite of six Creative Health programmes in Warwickshire to improve citizen's mental health and wellbeing, quality of life and social capital through the arts. A pre-pandemic study of an 'art on prescription' model in Gloucester demonstrated it significantly reduced hospital admissions and GP attendance, and mitigated against the growing demands on health and care services.

At the point of commissioning, Warwickshire recorded higher than average suicide rates and the mental health of the population was massively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Warwickshire Place-based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment July 2020 identified a number of priorities which this programme aimed to contribute to including:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing and reducing risk of suicide and self-harm;
- Reducing loneliness and social isolation; particularly among those living with long-term health conditions

Following a highly competitive tendering process, on **18th December 2020** Arty-Folks was appointed to deliver the main Creative Arts on Referral programme for adults 18+ over a period of 30 months across Warwickshire.

Three weeks later, on **1st January 2021**, we launched the programme for January to March and the first workshop Come Connect ran 10 days later on **11th January 2021** online. At that point, the country was again in lockdown and the future looked bleak and uncertain. We are extremely proud of our team of staff who responded at such speed to the commission and created a fantastic programme of courses to support people when they needed it most.

The programme was not intended to provide individual or group therapy, but aimed to engage adults with low to moderate mental health needs in a broad range of creative activities based on educational principles. Initially, the programme was named 'Creative Arts on Referral' which caused a lot of confusion and created a barrier to signing up as in fact, no professional referrals were needed. We **rebranded** the programme '**Art for Wellbeing**' to describe the aims and objectives in easy and welcoming terms.

Arty-Folks programme of Art for Wellbeing courses were co-designed with participants to

- support people to learn new skills, explore their creative side, and develop new hobbies
- increase self-esteem and confidence in own skills and abilities
- reduce social isolation and provide signposting to services to reduce the risk of harm
- educate on creative techniques to maintain emotional and mental wellbeing
- support social confidence and increase community engagement
- empower life-long creative learning beyond the course

The following pages offer a comprehensive evaluation of the extensive participant data we amassed from January 2021 to July 2023, spanning a 30-month period. We hope to highlight the accomplishments of the program amidst exceptionally challenging circumstances and we take the liberty to offer recommendations, envisioning the path forward based on our insights and observations.

Programme Targets



No. Participants engaged

1,311

Target: 1,200



No. Courses delivered:

145

Target: 142



Total course bookings:

1,940

Target 1,311

**“The world of reality has its limits;
the world of imagination is boundless.”**

– Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Case study Stepping out in Nuneaton

There are so many things I loved about the course: The creative guidance, the encouragement and knowledge of staff. The relationships we formed within the group and the support we all gave each other when we were struggling creatively and also with our lives.



I was living in South Africa and I had to come back because of Covid. I had left in my early twenties and had to come back in my late 60s. Before this course

I had been feeling disorientated, desperately lonely, and out of my depth.

My Social Prescriber referred me and I'm so glad I attended Stepping Out. It got me out of a rut and out the house, and I've met lovely people my own age. I've learnt lots of new crafts and making this card helped me start writing poetry again. I've now found good company, I'm feeling fitter, and I've started to feel at home again in Nuneaton.

Come Connect

a free online workshop to start your creative journey and connect you to like-minded people

Thursday 2nd September, 4pm-5pm



Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire

a programme of free courses and workshops supporting the mental wellbeing of adults in Warwickshire



Healing Art of QiGong

6-week course starting
Tuesday 12th October
10am - 12pm

QiGong is an ancient practice to harmonise body and mind that is rooted in Chinese medicine and philosophy.

In this course you will learn to combine physical movement, creative imagining, and art skills development that will help you tune into yourself and rediscover your positive energy.



Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire

free online and in-person courses and workshops supporting the mental wellbeing of adults in Warwickshire



Creative Arts on Referral

a programme of free online courses and workshops supporting the mental wellbeing of adults in Warwickshire



Uniquely Vincent

9th June 2021, 7pm - 9pm

Free 6-week online painting course with acrylics focusing on the life and work of Vincent Van Gogh

<https://tinyurl.com/3reddbxz>

WWW.arty-folks.org.uk
courses@arty-folks.org.uk



ARTY FOLKS Art for Wellbeing Coventry & Warwickshire

free courses and workshops supporting the creativity and mental wellbeing of adults

April-May 2023 online and in-person

Mindful Crafts 6-week course

18.4. Lillington Library, 10.30am-12pm

<https://tinyurl.com/5ybrwax>

18.4. Leamington Library 1pm-2.30pm

<https://tinyurl.com/ywmnu46z>



Arty-Folks 3-week course

19.4. Coventry Studios, 10am-12pm

<https://tinyurl.com/qdchug>

10.5. Coventry Studios, 10am-12pm

<https://tinyurl.com/4uhhd4a5>

Lunch&Learn online workshops

15.5. Creative Journaling, 12.15pm-12.45pm

<https://tinyurl.com/2bkmcv9n>

16.5. Landscape drawing, 12.15pm-12.45pm

<https://tinyurl.com/bdzcxs35>



overcome writers block and enjoy playing with words and images

tinyurl.com/3jj98n3d

Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire

supporting the mental health and creativity of adults



Fine Art to Wellbeing

a free 6-week creative self-development course for adults struggling with stress, anxiety and depression.

starting 15th Sept. 2021, 1pm-3pm



Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire

free online and in-person courses and workshops supporting the mental wellbeing of adults in Warwickshire



Lunch & Learn Landscape Drawing #MHAW23

Tuesday 16th May 12.15 - 12.45



Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire supporting the creativity and mental health of adults

Book your place: <https://tinyurl.com/bdzcxs35>



Art for Relaxation

free 3-week online evening course for adults in employment

Tuesday 1st Nov. 7pm-8.30pm



Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire supporting the creativity and mental health of adults

Book your place:

tinyurl.com/2uv7mt5f

www.arty-folks.org.uk
courses@arty-folks.org.uk
mob. 074 436 436 34



Art for Wellbeing

for adults in Coventry & Warwickshire

June & July '23

FREE courses online or in-person

5.6. Painting for Pleasure

6-week online 10.30am-12pm

<https://tinyurl.com/57hj3tch>

Evening course for people in work!

5.6. Painting for Pleasure

6-week online 7pm-8.30pm

<https://tinyurl.com/3andpur9>

13.6. Mindful Crafts 6-week

Kenilworth Library, 10am-11.30am

<https://tinyurl.com/4fw89dyh>

28.6. Arty-Folks Studios

3-week Coventry 10am-12pm

<https://tinyurl.com/y67tu8y>



Passion For Plants

Inspired by Botanical Artists learn to paint, draw and collage to express your passion for plants.

FREE 5-week online

starts
Mon 25th April
7pm-8.30pm
for adults in employment

book your place here:
tinyurl.com/yxfj4xep

www.arty-folks.org.uk
courses@arty-folks.org.uk
mob. 074 436 436 34



Winter Crafts

FREE 3-week online course

Mon 28th Nov
1pm-3pm

Book your place:
tinyurl.com/ye2kkj8t

for adults in employment
Mon 28th Nov
7pm-8.30pm

Book your place:
tinyurl.com/y2ce496w



www.arty-folks.org.uk
courses@arty-folks.org.uk
mob. 074 436 436 34

Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire supporting the creativity and mental health of adults



Mindful Crafts

FREE 6-week course for adults in Leamington



starts Tues 18. April, 1pm-2.30pm
at Leamington Library, CV32 4AA

book your place:
tinyurl.com/ywmnu46z

Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire supporting the creativity and mental health of adults



Reasons for Enrolment

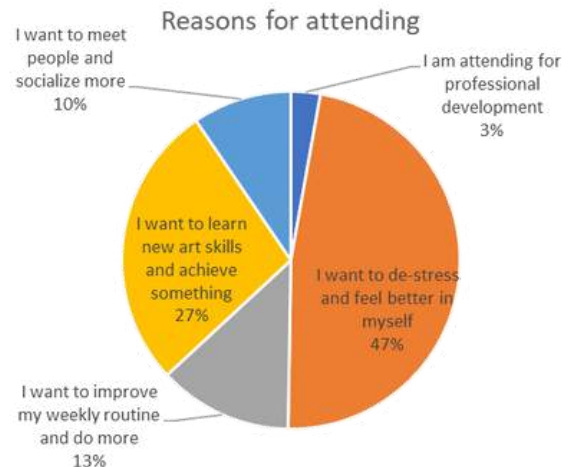
All our promotional material described Art for Wellbeing courses as targeted to 'adults struggling with stress, anxiety and depression'. In fact, the majority of participants joined to **'de-stress and feel better in myself'** and to support their mental health and wellbeing.

3% of participants attended for **professional development** to find out how we were running art classes online, and individuals who were considering starting their own therapeutic business.

10% participants joined wishing to **'meet people and socialise'** more. A 6-week course enabled people to connect and begin forming supportive relationships in-person as well as online. Some individuals found out they lived in the same area and arranged to meet up, and some groups of participants decided to continue creating together following the course. Many continued to meet up online and gained the confidence to join more online activities.

Attending a course helped to rekindle the creative practice or kickstarted a new hobby of those who joined to **'learn new art skills and achieve something'**. While this was an important element in the design of our courses, equally important was the incorporation of relaxation and self-care techniques.

People who enrolled to **'improve my weekly routine'** often expressed their sadness or frustration at the course ending. Their feedback remained consistent: "more courses / not long enough / more time". During the pandemic many had become socially isolated and nocturnal "my sleep patterns are all over the place". A degree of structured living is important to maintain health and wellbeing, and our courses provided a participants with a starting point to re-evaluate and re-design their lifestyle patterns. During the pandemic many who had lost their self-care routine said the 6-week course had increased their motivation, but felt they needed more time to cement positive change.

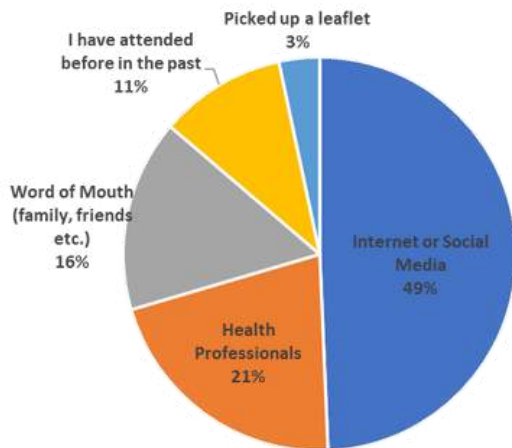


TO NOTE

Participants booked their place through the Coventry&Warwickshire Recovery Academy website and Arty-Folks' own website. People had unrestricted access to booking courses but it was originally intended that participants would attend only **one** 6-week course. All courses were free of charge and substantial art material packs were posted to individual addresses.

Considering the extraordinary circumstances the Covid-19 pandemic imposed on us all, we permitted some participants to attend more than one course. These were mainly people unable to leave their homes: those who were shielding or housebound with health conditions that put them at high risk of Covid infections, those with substantial mental health needs in single households whose NHS support had suddenly stopped, and those who were most at risk of suicide and hospitalisation.

Marketing



How did you hear about Arty-Folks?

Reaching people in need was our primary concern as the Covid-19 pandemic raged on. Social isolation had become an upsetting new norm particularly for those whose digital skills had suddenly become insufficient. Overnight, the traditional printed tools to reach people such as posters/leaflets, or newspapers/newsletters were ousted and we were all catapulted into a new digital era.

The majority of individuals found out about the programme through our **Facebook** page. **Social Prescribers** were the main signposters during 2021. NHS services including **IAPT, GP, and Crisis Team** were the main signposters during 2022-23.

Participants booked a place through Arty-Folks own website booking system or the Coventry&Warwickshire Recovery&Wellbeing Academy.

13.7% enrolled through Coventry&Warwickshire Recovery Academy
86.3% enrolled through Arty-Folks website booking system

Booking through the Recovery Academy and through Arty-Folks website worked reliably, but our own booking system gave us more control. From 2022, we established a 2-stage enrolment process that allowed us to identify participants outside the CV postcode and also prevent participants booking on multiple courses. In general, attendance was better by participants who signed up through Arty-Folks website.

All courses were free and art packs were also posted or hand delivered free of charge.

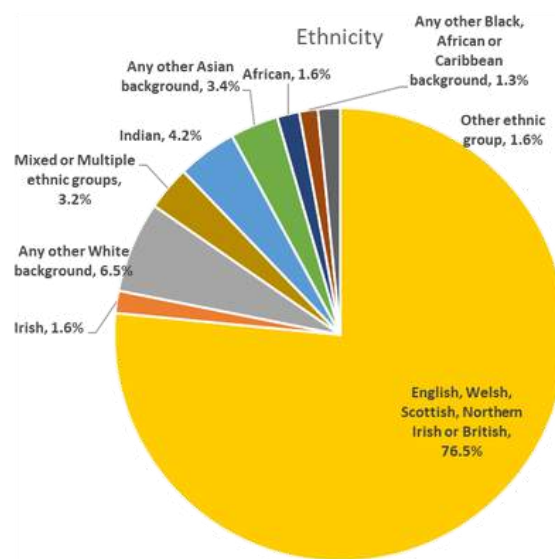


Participants: Ethnicity

Art for Wellbeing captured the imagination of people of all backgrounds and walks of life during what hopefully will remain an exceptional time in our lives.

A positive side to this pandemic is that it removed some of the mental health stigma across all demographics, at least around low to moderate mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression.

We are pleased to report the programme engaged exceedingly well with **23.5% participants of different ethnic backgrounds.**



Considering that the population in Warwickshire is 95.9% White British, nearly a quarter (23.5%) of Art for Wellbeing participants were of different ethnic backgrounds and included refugees and migrants. In discussions online as well as in-person, participants remarked that mental illness is seen as character weakness or deficiency in many minority ethnic communities, and that Covid-19 has lifted some of those misconceptions and enabled more people to ask for help.

**“There is nothing more truly artistic
than to love people.”**

– Vincent van Gogh

42, female, key worker, British Pakistani, attended 6-week Art for Relaxation online

“I have learned I can use art to relax and get in touch with my emotions. It’s been very difficult this last year with the pandemic and I didn’t realise how stressed and angry I had become. Although it took me many weeks to open up creatively and let go of tensions, when I finally did it felt so good!”



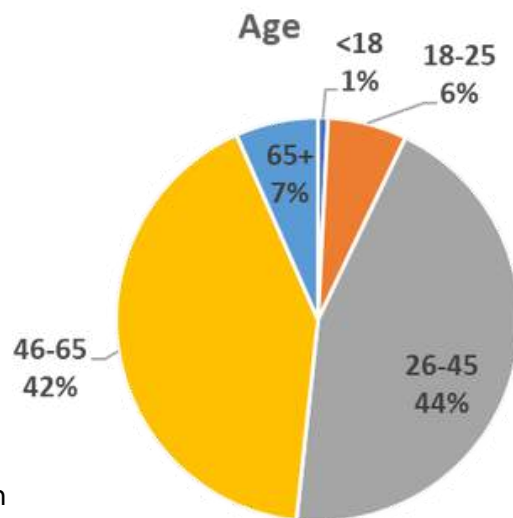
Participants: Age range

Art for Wellbeing was designed to engage adults 18+ and participants data shows we reached a very wide age range.

Unsurprisingly, **86% of participants were aged 26-65yrs old** as this is the age group most aware of their own stress levels and impact on their daily lives. While everyone struggled to adjust to life during and post-covid, the mental stress on working age adults seemed the most cutting and severe.

The number of 18-25yr olds attending was lower than anticipated. Through 1:1 discussions we learnt that this age group preferred to 'blank' and socialise through online gaming and group chats with friends, rather than seeking the company of strangers. Conversely, digital socialising may also be the root cause of much anxiety and depression in young people today.

The number of people aged **65+** remained quite low throughout the programme, mainly because their digital capacity as well as willingness to come online remained consistently low. Particularly during 2021 many refused help to come online and preferred to "wait until this is over." Participants who showed an interest worked 1:1 with our staff to learn Zoom functions and etiquette, and many then felt that it had given them a new lease of life.

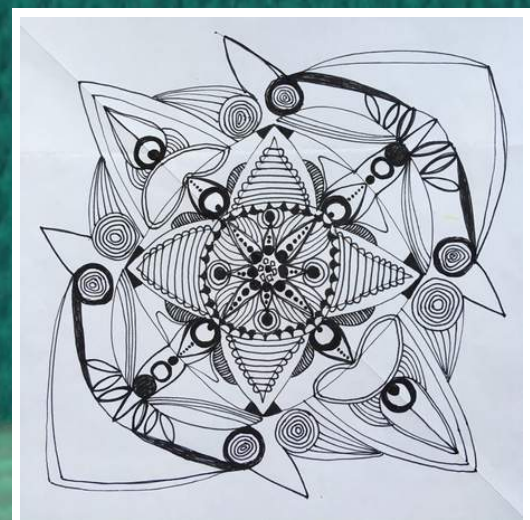


TO NOTE

The pandemic increased the pressures on people in employment to breaking point particularly when furlough ended Sept.'21. Professionals who once had felt resilient, capable and reliable, felt the rug had been pulled from underneath their feet. Overnight they had to become home educators, learn digital skills for remote working, and run their own household as well as caring for their elderly parents.

During evening courses participants often expressed their shock and disbelief as their carefully crafted work-life balance had disintegrated and how much their life had taken a downturn. Rushing from one online meeting to next, they felt overwhelmed by endless to-do-lists despite their best efforts at multi-tasking.

Many elderly lost their family support to become very isolated and at risk of self-neglect. October 2021-March 2022 was undoubtedly the most challenging period for our staff team with now the majority of daytime participants lacking digital skills and unfamiliar with online communication skills.



Participants: Gender

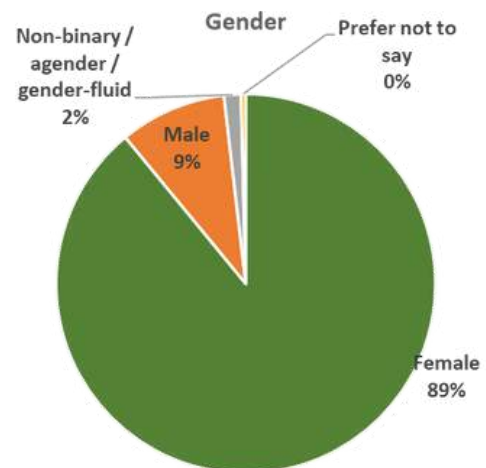
In general, recreational visual arts as well as mental health therapies are accessed predominantly by women, and not surprisingly the majority of Art for Wellbeing participants were female.

The only course we ran that attracted **more men** than women was the Stone Carving course held outdoors at The Kenilworth Centre in April 2021, which was the first in-person course we were able to deliver safely.

Attendance by male participants followed the pandemic and fluctuated, i.e. higher at start of 2021 during the furlough period, and increasing again towards the end of 2022 with the cost-of living crisis at its peak and increasing levels of burnout in the working population.

Initially, the need for self-care appeared to take lower priority in males as they prefer to 'just get on with it', a mentality that increases stress and pressure and during Covid has shown to further increase the risk of male suicide.

Participation by people who identify as non-binary remained low and in line with the number of 18-25yr olds engaged. This age group remained connected through established channels and found greater comfort socialising through familiar internet forums, gaming, group chats, and social media platforms. For many, the pandemic was 'a breeze' at least initially as the pressures of establishing adult life and career paths were suspended. However, as the pandemic dragged on, the lack of opportunities for in-person socialising with their peers increased their insecurities and self-consciousness..



Stone Carving course Kenilworth April 2021



28yrs old, male, USA-British, parent
"Learning that everyone has their own style and you don't have to constantly measure your talents/creativity with other peoples. Feeling able to talk about depression and getting helpful info."

66yrs old, male, White British, sculptor
"I live alone and Covid had a huge impact on my depression. So good to be part of a like minded group and stretch my skills. Improved my confidence no end!"

Participants: Locations

Art for Wellbeing was aimed to support residents in Warwickshire and all our course promotional materials stated this very clearly. We rejected bookings from people living outside area and abroad (we received bookings from as far as India, USA, Canada, as well as Zimbabwe!)

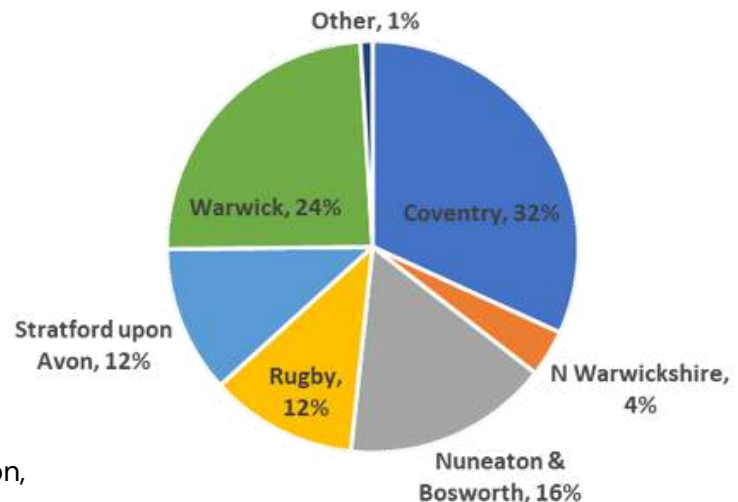
As such, the programme reached residents equitably across the region:
32% living North Warwickshire
36% living South Warwickshire

Warwick: Kenilworth, Leamington, Southam, Stoneleigh, Lighthorne Heath, Warwick

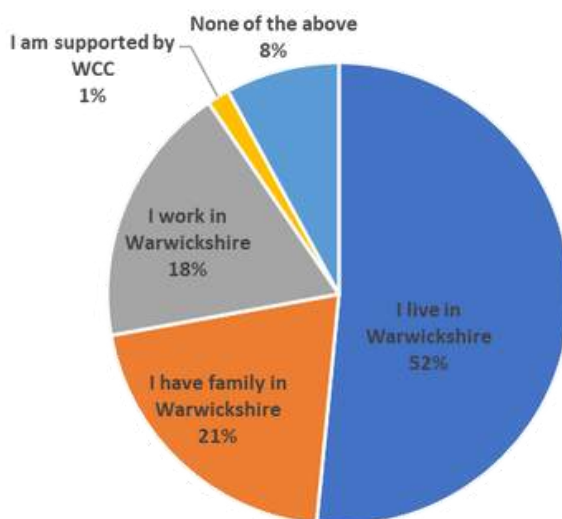
North Warwickshire: Water Orton, Atherstone, Arley, Fillongley, Bedworth, Nuneaton

Rugby: Brinklow, Rugby, Wolvey, Wolston, Brandon

Stratford: Wellesbourne, Stratford, Shipston, Bidford, Alcester



1% 'other' refers to participants who live outside area but work in Warwickshire. These were mainly NHS workers based in Leicestershire and Birmingham who work for CWPT North Warwickshire



The commission required courses to be promoted through through the Coventry&Warwickshire Recovery Academy which is open to residents across the CV postal code area.

As this programme was aimed to support residents in Warwickshire, we minimised the number of Coventry residents enrolling by concentrating our marketing to the North of Warwickshire, and in particular to areas of high deprivation such as Bedworth and Nuneaton.

Note that only 8% of participants had no links to Warwickshire. It is interesting to note that many Coventry residents, particularly the older generation, understand Coventry to be part of Warwickshire and make no distinction.

"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."

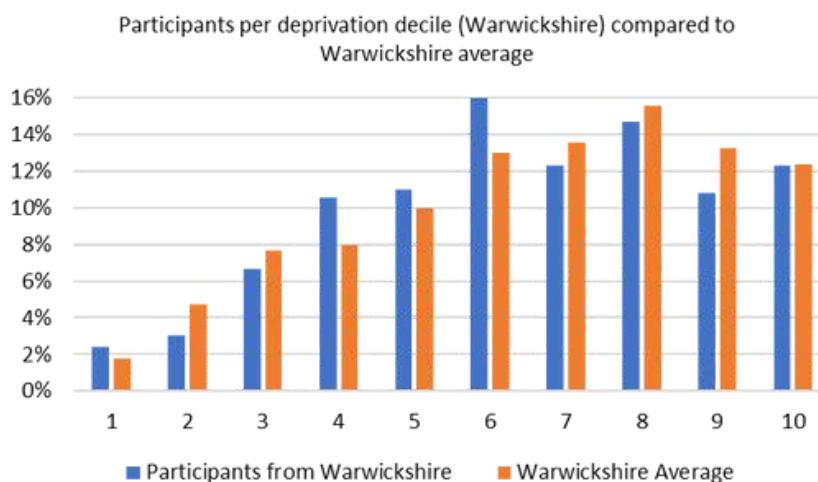
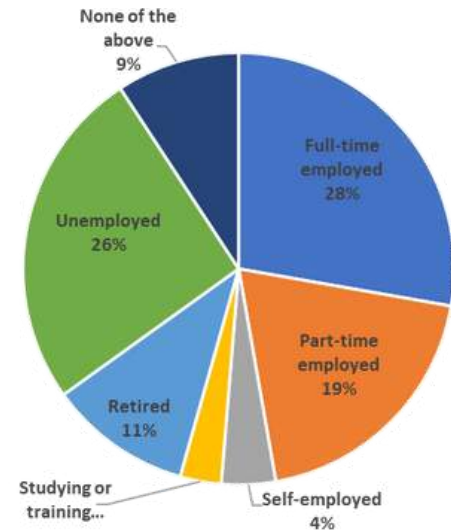
– Pablo Picasso

Participants: Economic Background

Art for Wellbeing aimed to meet the creative needs of all demographics which included the economically inactive as well as those in employment or studying.

Data demonstrates that a full spectrum of economic backgrounds attended our courses, each with their own needs and expectations which our staff team met by tailoring delivery.

During 2021 in particular we ran bespoke courses and workshops for educational staff, and local authority and NHS key workers to suit their needs and work commitments. For example, we piloted courses before work 8.30am–9am, after work 5pm–6pm, but ultimately found that 7pm–8.30pm was the best time for people to be able to put their day pressures aside and make space for 'me'-time.



Data demonstrates that our engagement with people from deprived neighbourhoods loosely followed the Warwickshire average.

Participants living in affluent areas (deciles 8–10) were predominantly in South Warwickshire, in full-time employment such as NHS or local authority staff, key workers, and educational staff, or retired professionals.

We also asked participants: What is your source of income?

48% salary/student loan

10% receive pension

21% basic benefits

27% receive additional benefits such as PIP or Carers allowance

21% answered they had no income of their own

"I would rather die of passion than of boredom."

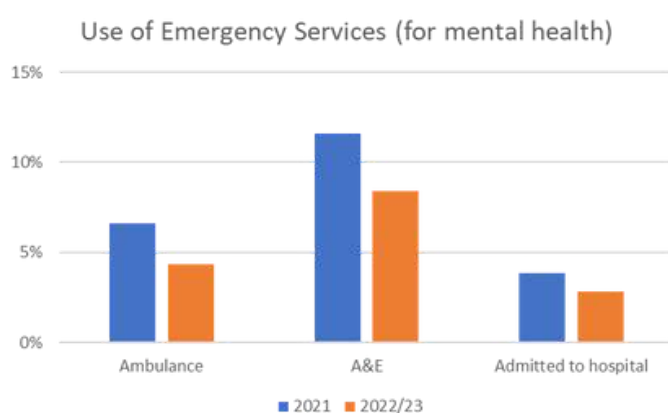
– Vincent van Gogh

Participants: Mental Health

Participants completed start and end course questionnaires online that gave staff some indication as to how the individual self-assessed their wellbeing and life situation. Staff had no access to medical data or information from health care providers.

Some participants felt questionnaires were an infringement and there was no obligation to complete them. However, they were an important element that helped staff prepare activities and understand people's ability to engage in a group independently, to ensure we signpost and refer participants with needs and expectations we are not able to meet, and manage group dynamics which were often quite complex.

Participants use of emergency services



Participants data shows that 2021 was a particularly difficult year for our team as **23% participants had used emergency services for their mental health and presented themselves with far higher acuity than envisaged for this programme.**

Hospitals were still focused on supporting Covid patients and patients were not being seen by primary nor secondary care staff.

Inevitably, the NHS crisis increased the number of people referred to our programme by NHS acute mental health services like the Crisis/Home Treatment Team as well as hospitals referring their patients to us for 'occupation' while on ever extending waiting lists.

TO NOTE

September–December '21 we experienced a **10% increase of participants who had visited A&E** following self-injury, overdose or suicide attempt, and the number of people scoring high mental health needs nearly doubled.

Participants mental health data highlights some incongruences that are not easily explained; **40% state they have no known impairment, whether physical nor mental.**

However,

46% of participants reported taking medication for their mental health

81% are supported by family, GP, NHS mental health services, Voluntary Sector, or private counsellor.

Our understanding of these discrepancies are that many are taking anti-depressants and sleeping pills they can buy over the counter or online and do not recognise stress and poor sleep as a mental health issue.

1:1 Wellbeing Support

The stress of the pandemic and economic uncertainty were impacting on all demographics, and became particularly evident when furlough ended and people returned to work. Sept.'21 marked a huge step towards the new post-Covid world but increased the pressure on people in employment while participants with physical or mental disabilities lost the support structures they had relied on since the pandemic started.

The distress expressed by some participants was acute and facilitating courses became quite a challenge as participants would

- not use the camera or the microphone. It's extremely difficult to engage people in group activities if there is a refusal to communicate. People did explain that it was due to anxiety, and some explained their intrusive/paranoid thoughts.
- dominate the group and involving others in their own personal experiences.
- disrupt learning by demanding 1:1 attention and instruction
- lack digital skills and the ability to follow simple instructions
- noticeably emotional, i.e. crying, agitated, or unable to focus
- express suicidal ideations which was most distressing for all

However, as a team, we decided that not supporting people when they needed it most was not an option. After consulting with NHS suicide prevention specialist we decided to provide 1:1 coaching and mental health support to those whose start course questionnaire showed SWEMWBS scoring falling below 20 points, i.e. with higher mental health needs, and those visibly in distress.

We wrapped 1:1 Wellbeing conversations by phone pre- and post-courses, which rapidly became essential to improve attendance of **day-time participants**, to manage group dynamics and ensure participants engaged in learning rather than offloading.

Participants disclosed the socio-economic issues that were impacting on their lives and ability to engage. This included domestic violence, nuisance neighbours, homelessness, debts, food poverty, bereavement, divorce, children with poor mental health, caring responsibilities, on top of social and health anxieties: **"I've not been out of the house since the pandemic started and I've not see anyone all week."**

Case Study:

42yrs old, female, from Ukraine, living in Warwick, caring for disabled teen, divorced but living under same roof, deteriorating physical and mental health because she was forced to sleep on the settee for 3years, feeling trapped, no money of her own.

"I enjoyed the social aspect the most. Was nice to be in a small group and online. Not sure would have been brave enough to attend in person."

We referred her to Barnardos, Social Services, and Citizen's Advice. 6months later she emailed us to say she was working and she and her son had moved out.



Participants in employment who attended our evening courses were struggling with significant work pressures that put them at risk:

- Many self-employed were extremely stressed as they had lost contracts and were not able to claim furlough or benefits.
- cramped housing conditions working from home
- adjusting to home working and educating children at the same time
- looking after elderly parents who often lived far away
- domestic discord, separation/divorce proceedings halted
- the fear of bringing Covid-19 into the household and infecting loved ones
- fear of losing jobs, housing and financial worries

Case Study

32yrs old, female, neuro-diverse, Polish, single, part-time Administrator with NHS, private rented in Rugby, following overdose GP signposted to Recovery Academy and she enrolled on Passion for Plants course. During workshops participant was negative and argumentative which affected the class but she opened up when we called by phone to offer support.

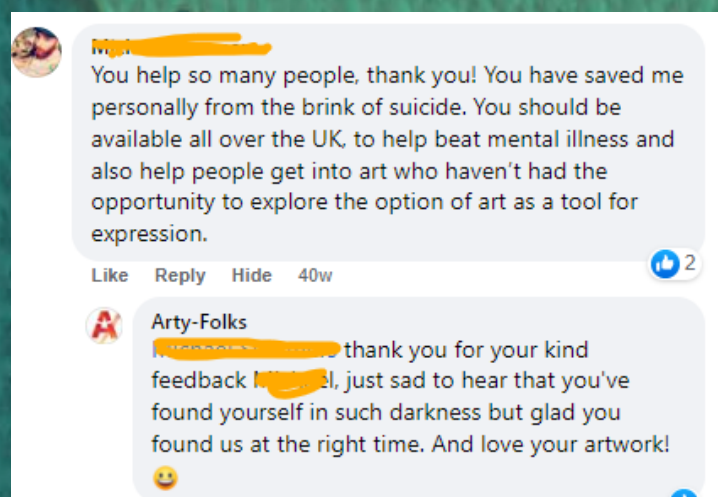
"My landlord won't renew my lease. I am trying to find another place but estate agents want me to accept something without seeing it. I can't make a decision and everything is so quickly snapped up. I feel totally overwhelmed. I can't go back home. I don't want work to now because they already see me as an oddball and I don't want my autism to be in my work records. I can't sleep and I'm too stressed to look after myself. I wish I could just die."

Over a period of 8months we accompanied her through this difficult journey and referred her to housing agencies, homeless prevention, social prescribing, Citizen's Advice, and groups relevant to her interests. She received the support she needed to resolve issues, she rejoined a martial arts group, and she was looking to book a painting holiday in future.

Case Study

35yrs old, male, Charity Worker, staff were concerned his artwork showed signs of confusion and distress, attended four courses over 15months.

During 1:1 phonecall he explained he had broken up from his partner, that he had become homeless, his medication had run out, he was suicidal, and experiencing what he recognised himself as a psychotic episode.



We were able to help him organise emergency medication and talk to his GP. By the end of the last course June'23 he was back in full-time work, housed safely, he was receiving counselling, medication was working well and his mental health was back under control.

TO NOTE

33% were parents and 17% were carers.

Attendance at daytime courses was less consistent as many had to take on additional responsibilities such as caring for elderly parents or grandchildren, or home educating their children.

15% were struggling with enduring physical health conditions such as cancer, COPD, etc.

This group was advised to socially isolate from March '20 for over two years which led to substantial deterioration of mental and physical wellbeing particularly of those who were struggling to self-care, or had no family/neighbours supporting them.

30% were struggling with substantial mental health conditions affecting their daily living.

At start of pandemic, patients detained under the Mental Health Act were granted 'leave of absence' from the hospital under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, subject to particular conditions specified in their leave care plan.

7% were on the autism spectrum/had learning needs.

Despite the enormous pressures participants were grappling with, even those in need of high intense NHS interventions achieved measurable health improvement over 6-weeks, and participants feedback provided good evidence that their mental wellbeing would have declined further without the support they received through Art for Wellbeing.

Feedback also showed that courses improved participants self-awareness and understanding of the therapeutic process, and that they felt better prepared to engage with NHS services following a course. With 'normalisation' April '22 onwards and more in-person contact the risk of suicide began to reduce slowly.

Case Study

78yrs old, White British, severe and enduring mental health needs, suicidal, referred by A&E
"The Fine Art to Wellbeing course provided me with a creative outlet in a supportive and safe environment. I was able to explore issues impacting my mental health and well being in a constructive and practical way.



I enjoyed having a go at new things in an atmosphere that felt safe and supportive. Being creative and just letting go, creating for enjoyment rather than with a specific purpose or end goal.

Following a guide I was still encouraged to put 'me' in to my work. I loved having some company and not feeling judged by people."

Course Design

Arty-Folks used its 25 years experience of running structured and progression-focused art and wellbeing projects to design the Art for Wellbeing Warwickshire portfolio of Arts and Crafts courses and workshops together with our members.

Already in July 2020 we resumed New Perspectives, a 'support bubble' in line with Covid-19 distancing rules and regulations. Members of this peer support group attended hybrid, i.e. some on zoom and a small group at Arty-Folks studios to **co-create** a programme of online art courses and workshops with a strong mental health content. Participants came from Kenilworth, Rugby, Nuneaton, Leamington, Bedworth, Warwick, Wolvey, and Attleborough as well as Coventry, and we are most grateful for their guidance.

We trialled a huge variety of formats to reduce barriers to engagement, from 30min, 1hour or 2hour workshops and from Taster one-off workshops to 3-week or 6-week courses at different times and at different days, including Sunday evenings. We also started courses at 8.30am, lunchtime, 4pm, 5pm, and 7pm to identify what works best in particular for teachers and key workers. We condensed course content for evening classes into 90min sessions while daytime required 2hours with a comfort break for the same activity for people who are unemployed, are shielding, and/or are struggling with long-term health conditions, and those retired.

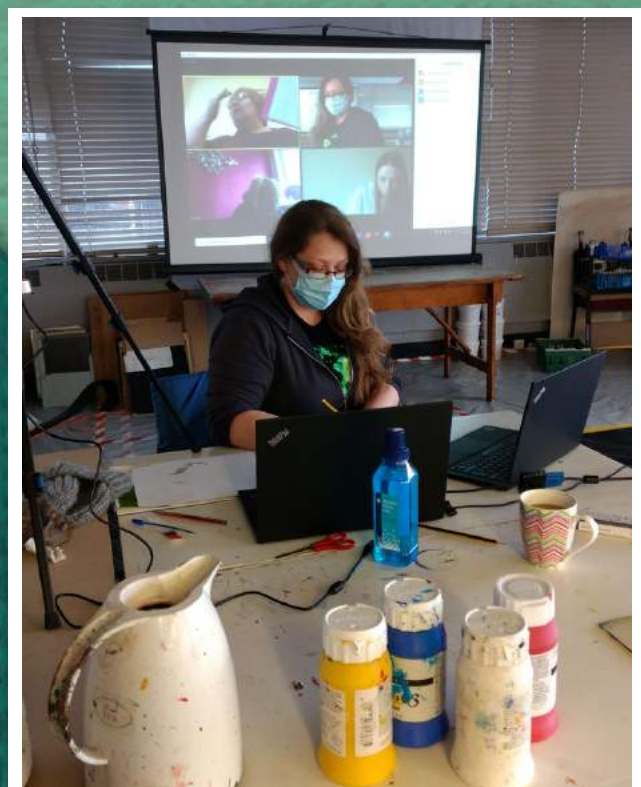
Courses during 2021 were mostly held online as libraries and community venues had remained shut. The balance began to swing Spring 2022 and we were able to run 65% courses in-person, focusing on areas of low deprivation and where provision and participation were low. 2023 we delivered 90% courses in-person.

TO NOTE

While raising awareness of the programme through social media worked extremely well, our concern was to reach individuals who lacked digital capacity and skills.

We worked closely with Social Prescribers who put us in contact with individuals. Our staff then provided over the phone the hands-on digital training and practice to build the skills and confidence for people to come online.

82yrs old, ex-teacher, Come Connect
"It was so confusing at first and I felt so out of my depth and also really stupid. But I'm loving it now. Zoom has given me a new lease of life and I'm really proud of myself."



Menu of Courses & Workshops

TASTER WORKSHOPS

Come Connect, 1hour workshop for participants who want to meet tutors first, gain an overview of what we offer and how we run activities on Zoom, and may need help to enrol on the course suited to their needs.

Lunch & Learn, 30 minute workshops for busy people who are looking to learn a new skill, to break up the working day, and use their lunchbreaks creatively. Workshops included tin art, wool crafts, landscape drawing, QiGong, and word art.

BEGINNERS

Art for Relaxation, 3-weeks or 6-weeks, introducing different creative techniques that are very effective in reducing stress and promoting a calmer frame of mind. This is a very accessible course as people use simple materials they have at home. We ran this course in different formats, i.e. as a morning, afternoon or evening course and also as Art before Work 8.30am–9.00am or Art After Work 5pm–6pm.

Healing Art of QiGong, single taster workshop or 6-week course. QiGong is moving meditation designed to promote physical and emotional self-healing, harnessing the creative process to harmonise body and mind.

Painting for Pleasure, 6-weeks, step by step essential skills for acrylic painting.

Stepping Out, 6-week course in-person Nuneaton only, walk&talk&outdoor art activity.

Winter Crafts, 3-weeks or 6-weeks, creating festive objects with simple household materials or natural materials gathered on a walk to brighten frame of mind.

INTERMEDIATE

Passion for Plants, 6-weeks, a very popular course inspired by artist Georgia O'Keefe and Victorian Botanical Artists. Participants learn to collage, draw and paint from observation and use their passion for plants to express themselves.

Aboriginal Art, 6-week, more acrylic painting techniques and art history.

Stone Carving, 4-weeks, in-person and outdoors at the Kenilworth Centre, led by local Leamington artist Amanda Randall. Participants learnt stone carving techniques and designs inspired by nature.

Mindful Crafts, 6-weeks daytime and evening, for people who enjoy crafting and making things. Participants complete 6 projects including crochet, Mexican weaving, dream catcher and macramé.

ADVANCED

Uniquely Vincent, 6-week, participants learn from Van Gogh's approach to landscape painting, and application techniques with acrylics to create depth and movement.

Creative Mindfulness, 6-week, water colour techniques and journalling to self-reflect and process thoughts and emotions

Fine Art to Wellbeing, 3-week or 6-weeks, creative techniques to self-reflect and raise self-awareness of obstacles and opportunities for personal change.

New Perspectives, 6-weeks daytime, Zoom&Room, a Creative Peer Support group for participants who completed a 6-week course and need a bit more support to start volunteering, employment or education.

Monthly Art Meet Up, 1.5 hour workshop Sunday evening, attended by course graduates to connect and share skills with other creatives and help each other to keep arts practice fresh and vibrant.

Case Study Conifer Court, Bedworth

We ran a 6-week Painting for Pleasure course with retired residents on suggestion of the Warwickshire County Council Community Development Officer.

Residents all knew each other very well and felt very comfortable and at ease despite the worries around Covid-19 infections.

Tutor Feedback: *"The workshops ran at a much slower pace than usual because people enjoyed socialising and bantering and there were many rounds of tea and biscuits. It was so entertaining and we all got so much out of it."*



69yrs old, male, retired handyman
"I've painted lots of walls before but never anything arty in colour. But I'll give anything a go."

We often sit together for a chat but otherwise don't do much. It was so nice to learn something new together, something to get those grey cells moving again.

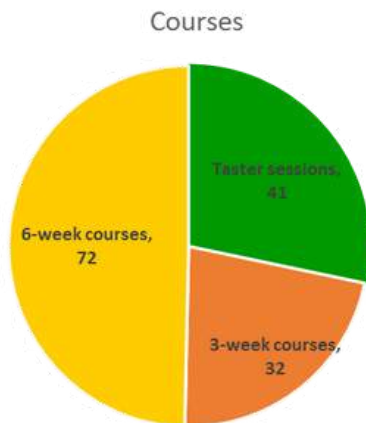
And we all had a laugh looking at our trees. Mine looked more like a witches broom!"

We are so pleased Conifer Court residents are still being creative together once a month and are now working on improving their water colour skills

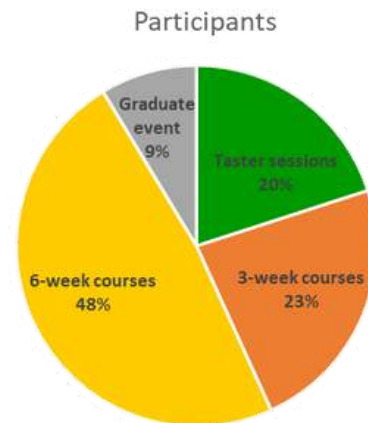
Course Attendance

The number of participants attending daytime courses remained fairly consistent throughout the programme. However, attendees in full-time employment fluctuated significantly, i.e. very high at start of furlough and again high during the winter months 2022/23.

145 courses in total



1,311 participants in total



Attendance versus course registration:

One-off Taster sessions **58%**

6 week course **82%** and of those **67%** completed the course

3 week course **70%** and of those **77%** completed the course

Online courses proved to be far more popular and well attended than we had anticipated. Attending from home enabled people with severe health conditions to attend as well as those without transport and living in rural areas of Warwickshire.

Parents and Carers in particular appreciated being able to attend from home and having the opportunity to have some 'me-time' in the company of other like-minded adults. The pandemic had confined them to their homes and they felt their social confidence dissolving as time went on.

In-person courses were equally well attended and it was most heart warming to see people reconnect after such a long time in social isolation. During workshops many shared their life stories and cried talking about missing loved ones and their shattered hopes and dreams. Many shared their fears about their health, their relationships, jobs and futures, and in the group found so much comfort and reassurance.

"A problem shared is a problem halved."

Even though participants came from very wide range of backgrounds and circumstances they were able to bridge divides and connect with each other in a safe and supportive environment.

Stepping out in Nuneaton

- social anchoring
- improved physical health



Mindful Crafts Kenilworth

- increased creative confidence
- increased openness to life-long learning



Art for Relaxation Bedworth

- increased self-awareness & coping skills



Miners Park Bedworth

- improved self-care
- reduced stress
- improved weekly routine

Course Satisfaction

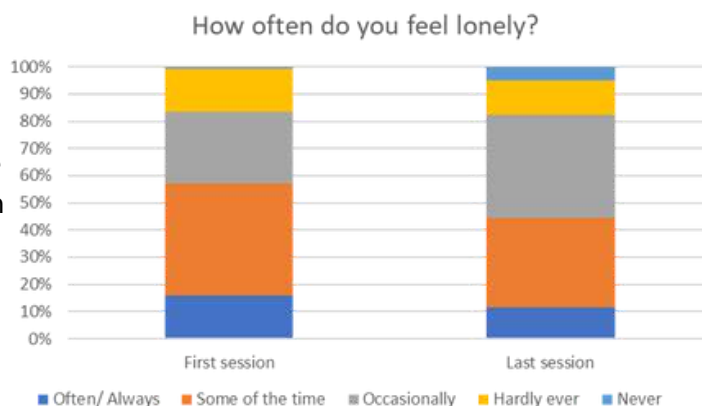


Impact: Loneliness

Loneliness is a complex issue influenced by various factors such as social isolation, changes in societal structures, and individual circumstances. The impact of loneliness on the wellbeing of adults has been of concern for many years and it is no understatement to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has heaped on more levels of compounding factors such as health fears, social anxieties, and financial pressures.

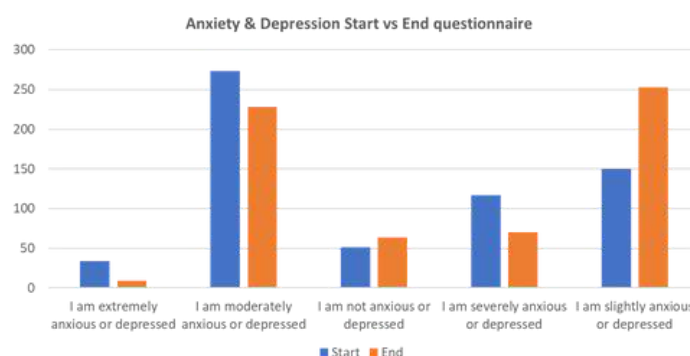
Participants **loneliness** data demonstrates the impact of Art for Wellbeing

- 58% felt lonely always or some of the time (bottom blue and orange) which **reduced to 44%** after attending a 6-week course.
- only occasionally feeling lonely increased from 24% to 39%



Similarly, participants **anxiety and depression** data demonstrates the impact of Art for Wellbeing

- 68% felt moderately to severely anxious or depressed which **reduced to 49%** after attending a 6-week course.
- 32% were not struggling with anxiety at start and this increased to 51%



All participants received information about other creative opportunities to encourage them to continue their creative journey beyond their course attended. Feedback and comments on social media have shown that many have joined other groups, have continued building their skills and creative confidence and are using their arts practice to reduce stress and bring joy to their lives.

Online, 6-week course for Teachers:
"How to spend time just for me, with no distractions and being with people who generally can relate to the job we do and its demands."

Online, 6-week course for NHS key staff:
"The relaxed atmosphere and positivity of the hosts make the classes really enjoyable and good for the soul. It felt so good to be a part of something again."

Tutor feedback:

"It has been a privilege to walk alongside them and see their self-understanding and their confidence to shape their lives strengthen through the creative process."



"Rekindled my passion as I'd stopped doing art for a long time. Allowed me to feel safe to create in my way (although guided) without judgement or worries if I was doing it right/how expected/good enough. And to enjoy the process and the time spent doing it with less focus on the end piece."

"I just love the relaxed vibe of the sessions. Then the fact that you receive feedback when you send pictures of your work in is just wonderful as you feel like your work matters and someone has taken the time to appreciate it."



"I loved the positivity. Everyone was encouraged to be themselves and I learnt to appreciate uniqueness and individuality."



"The art and mental health combo is magic!"



"I enjoyed meeting a lovely group of people, the feeling of a safe space where I could share feelings and experiences without being judged. I feel it's ok not to be perfect, to just be myself, and I've been sleeping so much better."

"I've learnt that I can use my new crafting skills to help me relax and unwind, and I'm really enjoying it."



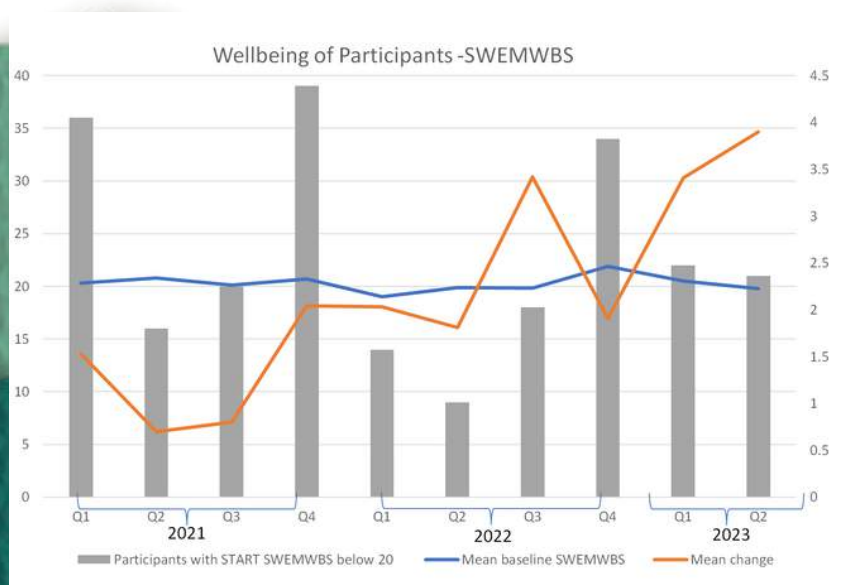
Impact: Mental Wellbeing

Arty-Folks has long-employed the use of SWEMWBS and other recognised scales for measuring change when working with adults experiencing mental health problems. To assess the impact of Art for Wellbeing, Arty-Folks used the 7 item Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale (SWEMWBS) which has been widely adopted in clinical and non-clinical settings for outcome measurement.

We are not providing our own detailed evaluation of SWEMWBS data in this report as we are looking forward to the final impact evaluation of all Creative Health suites undertaken by Coventry University. We are confident that their final report will speak for itself as loudly as participants qualitative feedback and will confirm a statistically significant improvement in their mental health and wellbeing as was the case in the interim report.

However, we feel it is beneficial to provide some baseline and average SWEMWBS improvement data to provide some context to our report. The SWEMWBS scale ranges from a low wellbeing score of 7-19, a moderate wellbeing score of 20-27 and a high wellbeing score of 28-35.

- Scoring at **baseline ranged from 7 to 33 points**. Participants in single households generally scored very low, while those retired and living with a partner generally scored highly.
- **20.3 was the mean baseline**, which is very low considering that 'moderate' scoring starts at 20 points.
- **24% of participants began our courses with a low wellbeing score of less than 20**. The health and wellbeing of participants was lower than anticipated at commissioning.
- At the peak, **Arty-Folks staff supported 67 people with poor mental health in the run up to Christmas 2021**. The strain on the staff was significant during the period October to December 2021 when the outlook was bleak and to maintain mental health and wellbeing during this time was a feat!



Case Study – "I AM CREATIVE." the journey of A.S.

58years old from Nuneaton suffering with severe arthritis and Psychosis, self-care issues and high risk suicide as she lives on her own, partner of 23yrs died at start of Covid, mother in care home with dementia, no other family, support by secondary mental health services halted, attended three courses.

A.S. was referred to Art for Wellbeing by Health Exchange Social Prescribing. We were informed that A.S. has a smart phone but has never used online platforms before. We called A.S. who also confirmed that **"I am not arty at all. I haven't done anything since school and I wasn't good at drawing even then but I'm willing to give anything a go. I haven't spoken to anyone for days and I'm wondering what the point of me being here is."**

We helped A.S. enrol on 'A Passion for Plants' 6-week painting course and we gave her a Zoom trial run before the course started. She completed a questionnaire that highlighted she was feeling very low indeed. Arty-Folks Wellbeing Coach called her for a 1:1 discussion to gain a better understanding of her mental health needs and the support she is currently receiving.

"My prescriptions had stopped suddenly and I became very ill. I had absolutely horrendous hallucinations and horrible intrusive voices and thoughts. I had lost interest in everything, didn't get dressed, didn't shower, didn't bother with eating, I laid on the settee and left the back door open for the dogs. I used to feel numb, no emotion, dead on the inside. I felt I was better off dead and my voices agreed, and so I took an overdose, but just couldn't abandon my dogs and my mum.

I had never used Zoom before but Arty-Folks staff helped me and now art has become a big part of my life. Gradually over the weeks the blackness started to lift and positive emotions came back. I enjoy my life now and I've made new friends and we do things together, positive and healthy things like walking and Tai-Chi.

I hadn't been in Nuneaton town centre for 2 years but now I meet my arty friends at a café and it has lifted my self-esteem. I am creative and I'm enjoying it, and that's all that matters. When I'm stressed the voices come back but I have a few art projects on the go that distract. I've never done so much art in my life!"

Wellbeing Mentor: "A.S. always attended and did her best but she was very conscious that her artwork was not as experienced as other participants'. It took her a while to appreciate that everyone has a different starting point and that what mattered was the openness to learning. The peer group was fantastic and I still remember the day when it finally clicked and A.S. visibly enjoyed being creative, being herself. She has since created some really quirky and original pieces of work! "

A.S. was able to forge lasting friendships which are giving her a purpose and meaning. Two years after the course they are still meeting up weekly for coffee, to visit exhibitions, go shopping, and even go on holiday together.

Case Study

Online Participant Nuneaton, female, 64yrs old retired teacher, diagnosed with terminal cancer, attended the Healing Art of QiGong.

"I could cry. Art was my life! And then it was all gone. This horrible illness took it all away from me and Corona just put the cherry on top. For 8 years now I've had to refuse social contact. It really got me to breaking point and I just didn't know how I was going to get back up.

I signed up for a course but had no idea how to use Zoom at start but after a few weeks it felt really nice!

I loved the breathing exercises and you meditate and you relay it into paint. And my daughter was so chuffed I had my water colours out again! And it really did bring about healing for me! Yes, I've got this horrible disease but I can see past that and go up here, into my imagination and mix my own colours, and this has really helped me put the difficulties with my body aside. I am not able to go out but I can think about what I'm going to paint next."



Case Study

In-person participant, 28yrs old, carer of profoundly disabled child

The acceptance of everyone and no one 'judging' others. Meeting people who are also finding things hard and that comfort that I am not the only one. The new skills I have learnt. The time it made me allocate for myself each week. I cannot thank those involved in making this course a reality enough.

Case Study

Online participant, mental health nurse:

"Being able to do it from home. It allowed me to be in a space where I feel comfortable and not have to worry about travelling or childcare etc. Also the art theme was wonderful. Doing arts and crafts refocused my mind, even if just for the hour, and made me have time away from everything."

Impact: Community

The outcome we are most proud of is that following a course, some participants decided to continue being creative together to **form new social and creative community groups** that are continuing to thrive.

People have continued to meet up at Bedworth Heath Community Centre, Bramcote Barracks Nuneaton, Rugby Library, Lighthorne Heath Community Centre, Lillington Library, and in Bidford on Avon. Arty Avon in Bidford is now supporting over 25 mostly elderly participants per week, has raised its own funds, and is in the process of establishing as a Community Interest Company CIC.

We are so proud Arty-Folks was nominated for a **BBC Make a Difference** award by an Art for Wellbeing participant from Water Orton and we were shortlisted in the community category.



Feedback of Liz Harvey, course tutor:
"The way people supported each other in our courses has been heart-warming. At times we forgot the pandemic was still all around us. We felt so close, protecting, nurturing, encouraging, melting away the distance and divide. These dark times have really made people's humanity shine."



Conclusion

Arty-Folks delivered **145 Art for Wellbeing courses** and supported **1,311 individuals** through a time when we all felt lost, confused, and frightened. We **co-designed our learning materials to combine art with mental health** to enable people to communicate thoughts, feelings, experiences, and ideas to others in a creative and liberating process that brought about empathy and greater understanding. This was achieved **online and in-person** across the county from Zoom to libraries, community centres and church halls, attracting and supporting those most in need from **more deprived areas, across age groups, from all ethnic backgrounds, differing economic situations and mental health experiences.**

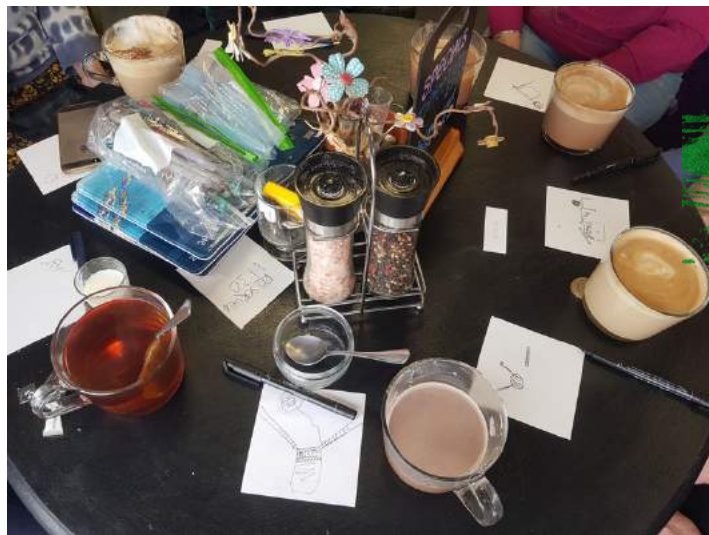
The Art for Wellbeing programme demonstrated that **through Art people can awaken to creative perspectives, ideas and values that gave many the confidence to make positive changes in their lives** under the most difficult of circumstances. Through learning new skills to continue to practice, **wellbeing and selfcare** can be increased and sustained.

As we actively built connections to counteract **social isolation**, every smile, conversation, and shared moment collectively contributed to weaving a fabric of a more creative, connected and compassionate community with **friendships continuing beyond the course.**

Though originally outside the scope of this programme, one extremely important outcome has been that **Art for Wellbeing courses delivered in person have shown to spark creative community groups run by creative volunteers grounded in their locality, and who are able to meet local need.**

A positive, measureable impact on well-being can be achieved in just 6 weeks. However, the feedback, case studies and **qualitative research adds colour to the story** and warmth to the heart.

It has been an honour and a privilege to walk creatively beside so many individuals during the most extraordinary times in our lives and we are immensely proud of what we have achieved. We are looking forward to Coventry University's impact evaluation and we are confident it will provide robust evidence that creative health interventions provide value for money as well as social return on investment.



**"Creativity is contagious,
pass it on."
-Albert Einstein**

Finances

Art for Wellbeing Final Finance Report					
	18 m	12m	Budget	Expenditure	Notes:
Management Overhead (Administrator salary, office costs, phone, internet, insurance, accounts, etc)	£26,800	£14,500	£41,300	£32,376.02	Overheads were lower as we managed costs well and used booking systems to help manage the administration.
Artist tutor salaries	£66,000	£39,600	£105,600	£119,960.64	Art tutor costs were necessarily higher - the mental health of some participants meant that workshops required higher levels of staffing. We also completed more one to one sessions than had been budgeted and provided digital skills support.
Art materials	£1,024	£400	£1,424	£1,556.21	We posted art packs to participants before attending the course.
Marketing & advertising	£800	£200	£1,000	£2,121.81	Costs were higher as we had to use digital advertising to promote courses, and we could use printed materials only locally.
Staff & volunteer travel costs	£1,800	£1,000	£2,800	£5,174.09	Costs were considerably higher as petrol costs had tripled during the time of delivery.
Venue hire	£5,400	£4,300	£9,700	£1,294.00	Venue hire was lower because we used libraries and warm hubs to support them increase footfall, and because participants felt safe to attend.
Equipment	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£563.36	Equipment to support on-line delivery
			£162,824	£163,046.13	

About Arty-Folks

Arty-Folks was established in 1995 by users of mental health services in collaboration with a visual artist. We are a registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee that exists to inspire adults of working age with mental ill health in Coventry and Warwickshire through the creative process to regain self-belief and take control of their personal journey to recovery alongside their peers.

We run a programme of art courses and workshops combined with mental health support online and in-person to:

- reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- inspire people to achieve stability and self-manage their mental health conditions.
- unlock people's creativity for self-discovery and confidence to live purposeful lives.
- support access to mainstream community activities to increase physical and mental wellbeing -build resilience for social, community, and economic engagement.
- foster art for mental health and community wellbeing.

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