



Measuring Success in Community Arts & Culture Programmes for Older People

by Holly Sandiford

Introduction

Community Culture Club is a creative wellbeing programme for older adults, inclusive of those living with dementia, those who are carers, those with other long-term health conditions, and those who are lonely¹ or socially isolated. It is based at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell (MoN), part of Norfolk Museums Service.

This report looks at how we evaluated the Community Culture Club (CCC) programme in 2024-2025, what worked well, what could be better, and how we have made improvements from the previous year. This report discusses the evaluation tools themselves, how they have been used, how accessible they are, and how they affect participants' experiences. There is a separate evaluation report on the 2024-2025 programme itself.

My role as a creative researcher has been kindly funded by Norfolk Initiative for Coastal and Rural Health Equalities (NICHE Anchor Institute) at the University of East Anglia. NICHE Anchor Institute is funded by Health Education England and is dedicated to addressing health disparities in Norfolk and Waveney's coastal and rural communities. My role involves evaluating the programme in a sensitive and appropriate way, developing an embedded evaluation toolkit, co-authoring a comprehensive report, and training museum staff in best practices for community engagement evaluation.

Last year, we made a shift from using traditional surveys to more creative, participant-led evaluation methods. This year saw improvements to our methodology, wellbeing metrics, and creative evaluation activities, informed by our learning from the programme so far.

Working with the five aims of the programme and also defining 'community building' as our overarching aim helped us focus and refine the questions for the evaluation this year.

¹ **Loneliness** is a subjective feeling which relates to the difference between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact and is linked to the perceived quality of the person's relationships. Loneliness is never desired and lessening these feelings can take a long time

The Community Culture Club evaluation methodology

Please refer to the 2024-2025 evaluation report for more information about my background, full evaluation methodology, and the aims of Community Culture Club.

Our evaluation methodology follows a participatory and creative approach. We prioritise methods that allow participants to express their thoughts in ways that feel natural, rather than through formal written feedback.

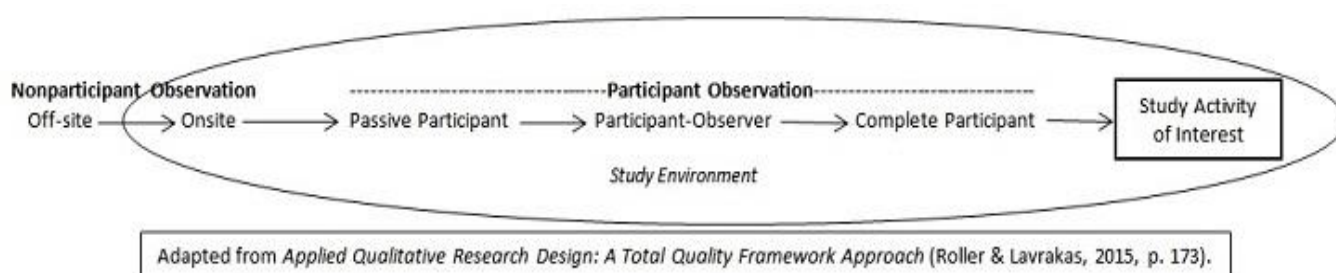
- **Observational evaluation:** Recording engagement, social interactions, and emotional responses during sessions.
- **Exploring wellbeing measurement tools and scales** to find those that are least intrusive and most appropriate for those living with dementia. This year, we used a new version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, which has been designed for people with intellectual disabilities and other neurodivergent conditions.
- **Embedded creative and sensory methods:** Using activities like collage, objects, and printing to encourage reflection. Evaluation is part of the session itself so that it feels integrated rather than an extra task and sessions end on a positive note.

By using these methods, we aim to make evaluation accessible, engaging, and relevant to the participants' experience.

Observational evaluation: Recording engagement, social interactions, and emotional responses during sessions

Observing engagement, social interactions, and emotional responses during sessions has been a key part of my role. As a researcher, I was mindful of my background and the need to avoid confirmation bias. Having worked in this field for years, both as a practitioner and researcher, I have seen firsthand how the arts can support wellbeing. My approach is subjective, and I do not aim for complete objectivity.

This year, I noticed a shift in my role from observant participant to participant-observer. Unlike last year, this time I deliberately sat back from the group to take notes on my tablet, making it easier to observe interactions. This felt appropriate given the larger group size and my intention to observe more closely. However, it also changed the dynamic: people became more aware of my presence in a research capacity. Two participants directly asked what I was doing, making my role more visible than before. One even commented, 'It must be interesting to observe the group.'



While this gave me greater insight into group interactions, it also created some tension. Taking notes in real time inevitably shifts the atmosphere, making participants more aware of being observed. To manage this, I focused on key outcomes linked to our broader goal of community building—social connections, emotional reactions, and a sense of belonging. By selectively noting observations rather than continuously writing, I could stay engaged while minimising disruption.

This shift has been both productive and thought-provoking. On one hand, stepping back allowed me to capture more nuanced interactions. On the other, it reinforced how observation itself can subtly shape group experiences. I will continue refining this balance for future evaluations, ensuring my presence supports rather than disrupts the natural flow of the sessions.

Using the new version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale designed for those with intellectual disability

This year, I trialled the adapted version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, designed for individuals with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent conditions. I chose this version as I felt it would be more suitable for group members living with dementia. It has four simplified questions instead of five and includes a visual scale to make it easier to understand.

With minimal guidance, participants found this scale easier to complete compared to last year's Warwick–Edinburgh short seven-point scale. People's needs are always different and can change over time, but this version felt well-suited to the group. The less support participants need to complete a scale, the more dignity they have in the process. To improve readability and reduce glare, I printed the scales on cream paper with black ink, following recommendations from the Alzheimer's Society. However, as this adapted scale does not directly align with the seven- or 14-point Warwick–Edinburgh scales, it may not be useful for comparing data to national benchmarks.

Overall, the adapted wellbeing scale was effective. Most participants found it straightforward, though some still needed support from carers. I would recommend using it again, but with the understanding that no single tool can capture the full impact of the programme. Wellbeing is complex, and many factors influence it beyond the sessions themselves. These scales should be used as part of a broader evaluation approach rather than relied upon as the sole measure of success.



Example of the scales and the tubes they were stored in for privacy.

Embedded creative and sensory methods: Using activities like collage, objects, and printing to encourage reflection. Evaluation is part of the session itself so that it feels integrated rather than an extra task and sessions end on a positive note

The sessions

Session outline 1: Museum of Us

Participants explored personal and museum objects, created labels, and curated their own 'Museum of Us' display.

Evaluation method: Object theatre

Participants choose an object that resonated with them and discussed why this was. Each choice symbolised something unique about the individual's personality, memories, or values, with objects resonating with themes like new beginnings, connection, self-reflection, and curiosity, tying back to the session's focus on how we give meaning and describe objects in museum spaces.



Evaluation tools

Random objects such as a mini spirit level, keys, a tape measure and some driftwood.

Evaluation question

What are you taking away from today's workshop?

Example responses to question:

- **Spirit level:** Participant 1 picked a spirit level because he broke his during a move, symbolizing a new beginning and the chance to 'be on the level.' It reflects the theme of balance and starting anew, possibly in practical or emotional realms.
- **Key:** Participant 2 chose a key, associating it with starting a new chapter in her life, making friends, and opening up to new experiences. The key symbolizes access to a new community and friendships within the group.
- **Twine:** Participant 7 chose twine, likening it to garden twine, as it reminded her of 'holding things together.' The twine reflects the group's bond, showing how they support each other and maintain connections.

Comments

This new evaluation activity gave participants a meaningful way to reflect on their experiences, deepening group connections that had already formed. The responses showed that people linked objects to their personal journeys, reinforcing themes of change, connection, and stability.

Bringing in more verbal feedback rather than written responses worked well. Using objects as prompts encouraged people to open up, and the discussions that followed were personal and reflective. Real, tangible objects seemed to create a stronger connection than images, making the activity feel more immediate and engaging. I have seen before how well objects work for people living with dementia – engaging on a sensory level when verbal communication becomes difficult.

That said, the method did not work for everyone. One participant, who is living with dementia, didn't pick an object but still took part in the conversation. It might have been too abstract to connect an object with the question, 'What are you taking away from today's workshop?'. In the future, it would be good to offer alternative ways for people to reflect, whether through verbal discussion, movement, or choosing a colour or texture instead of an object.

The key takeaway from this session was the importance of flexibility. Everyone should feel part of the evaluation, even if they engage differently. Keeping things open and responsive to individual needs remains central to making evaluation meaningful for everyone.

Session outline 2: Weaving

The group explored Norwich's weaving history, handled textiles, and designed their own prints.

Evaluation method: Communal woven collage

Participants contributed a strip of woven material in response to the question.

Evaluation tools

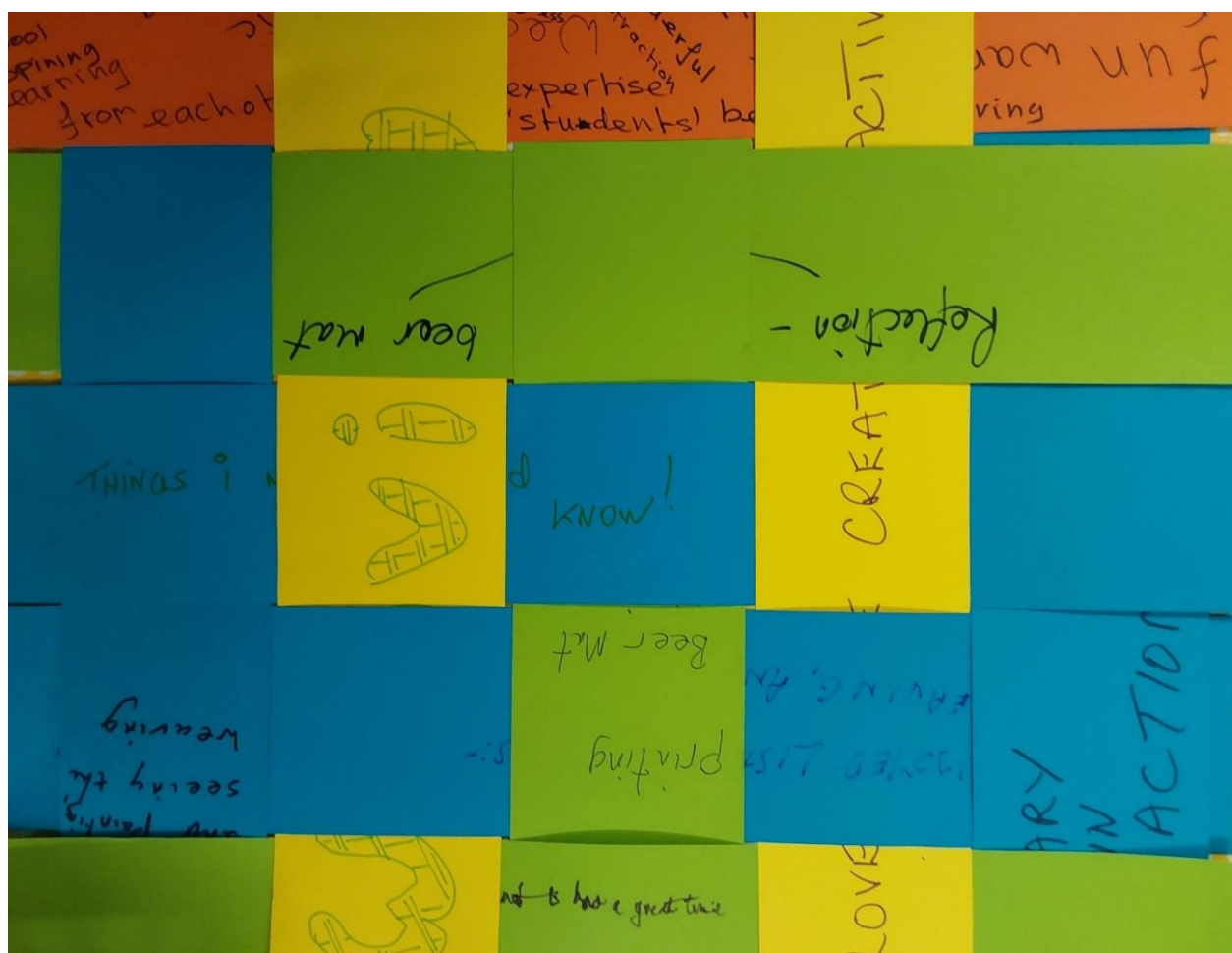
Transfer paints, crayons, coloured sugar paper.

Evaluation question

What was my favourite thing about today?

Example responses to the question:

- 'I enjoyed meeting new people and painting, seeing the weaving.'
- 'Weaving, fabric printing, pattern cards, wool, spinning, learning, beer mat weaving, fun and frolics, community, wonderful distraction, allows my brain to process, mindful, recording computer like.'
- 'I laughed and had a great time.'



Comments

This evaluation activity remained unchanged from last year, as it worked well. It was simple to run, tied in well with the session theme, and was well-received by participants. People enjoyed selecting their colours and seeing how the weaving came together at the end. The activity is also highly adaptable—it could be used in different settings, with the scale adjusted depending on the space and group size.

However, written responses were often quite brief, and for some, the writing element was a challenge. Midway through the programme, a participant's partner suggested reducing the amount of writing required in evaluations, particularly for those living with dementia. This was a helpful insight. Moving forward, I will keep written elements to a minimum, using them only when we need anonymous feedback or specific suggestions for improvements. Instead, I will look at increasing opportunities for verbal and sensory-based reflections to ensure evaluation remains inclusive and accessible for all participants.

Session outline 3: Chocolate

A session on the history of chocolate, including tastings and making chocolate-inspired ceramic bowls.



Evaluation method: Chocolate-box word selection

Participants choose a pre-written word from a “chocolate box” and share a related story.

Evaluation tools

Chocolate box with word slips.

Evaluation question

Have you noticed this word being reflected in the sessions?

Example responses to the question:

- **BOND** – ‘I think it's so important as people that we bond with other people, because social interaction and engagement, especially as you get older, is so really important for your mental health. This group is how much we look forward to it, because it's such a lovely activity, but it's just lovely being part of the group.’
- **CONNECTION** – ‘I just wanted to say thank you to you all for letting me come and be a part of the session today. Had such a wonderful time. I feel like it's been so welcoming and so lovely to make those connections with you all.’
- **TOGETHERNESS** – ‘I think that we, as we talk about things, and we move to different bits, to look at different things, and that we're together, but making sure that we're looking out for each other, and making sure nobody gets left behind and everybody gets included and has time for them to speak.’

Comments

This method was adapted from last year by providing words as a starting point for discussion instead of asking participants to write responses. This change encouraged more thoughtful reflections and made it easier for people to express their experiences in a structured way. The added structure worked well, giving space for personal interpretation while ensuring everyone had a way in. Participants found it engaging, and the word prompts helped them articulate their thoughts more easily.

One participant became emotional, reflecting on how much the group meant to them. Another initially chose the word “belonging” but later said, ‘It doesn’t apply to me,’ highlighting that for some, feeling connected takes time. This reinforced the importance of creating a space that allows people to express feelings, both negative and positive.

Using themed words helped strengthen group bonds, as participants listened to each other’s reflections and recognised shared experiences. However, timing was a challenge—introducing discussions about belonging and connection early in the programme may not have suited everyone. Next year, we might introduce these themes later to give people more time to settle in and feel comfortable sharing.

Session outline 4: The pharmacy

Participants explored historical pharmacy objects, made medieval herbal remedies, and created clay charms

Evaluation method: Message in a bottle

Participants write reflections on paper and place them inside antique bottles.

Evaluation tools

Old bottles, manuscript paper, posca pens.

Evaluation question

Do you feel more at home in the museum now? If so, in what ways? Write a message to someone to tell them how...

Example responses to the question:

- 'A time for company, creativity and calm, spent with like minded folk and support by kind and empathic group leaders.'
- 'I'm beginning to know my way around. I think it's always the people in a museum that make you feel at home.'
- 'I feel like I belong here. The staff and the ambience are welcoming. It is the "welcome" you get that makes me so comfy. The group are lovely and as we get to know each other I feel more comfy.'



Comments

This was slightly adapted from last year by the use of lined paper, which seemed to encourage longer responses. The old bottles themselves sparked conversations, with some participants reminiscing about their experiences with similar objects, such as old medicine bottles or household glassware. The sensory element of handling the bottles added an extra layer of engagement, making the activity feel more immersive.

However, this method still relied heavily on writing, which was not accessible for everyone. Scribing helped, but it also highlighted who was struggling. I tried to mitigate this sense of being different by explaining that I prefer to express things verbally, but it is not ideal.

While I had time to transcribe recorded conversations for this programme, that is not always practical in every evaluation setting. I will continue exploring ways to balance accessibility with meaningful reflection, ensuring participants can engage in ways that suit them best.

Someone said unprompted in this session that 'I like the different ways of evaluating, it is usually boring and brings you down a bit' – finding an interesting and engaging way of evaluating is exactly what we were hoping to achieve.

Session outline 5: Christmas

A festive session exploring Christmas traditions, smelling historical spices, and making medieval-style marzipan treats.

Evaluation method: Bauble connection activity

Participants write a message about a connection they felt with another person and place it in a bauble to give to that person.



Evaluation tools: Plastic baubles, dried flowers, evergreen leaves.

Evaluation question

Can you describe a connection you felt with someone in the group today?

Example responses to the activity:

- 'So I've got one for [another participant] here, because the other day, she was very kind and helped us find different groups that we'll be able to move on to once we've been...'
- 'This is for [another participant], looking dapper and adding sparkle to the group. Have a sparkly Christmas. It was really nice to meet you.'
- 'And this is for you, [another participant], from me. It's just like—it's been nice sitting next to you and learning more about you and all your interests. We've had some nice things in common—the things we didn't like and we did like.'

Comments

This was a new evaluation activity that encouraged participants to express appreciation and recognise the connections they had formed. Some participants noted it helped them notice connections they might not have otherwise reflected on. It provided a moment to acknowledge shared experiences and the small interactions that build relationships. Participants also commented that it was meaningful to hear how others had valued their presence in the group.

The activity created a sense of occasion, with participants gifting their reflections to each other in a way that felt natural and celebratory. The act of giving and receiving messages reinforced a sense of belonging and made people feel seen within the group. It encouraged people to appreciate the everyday ways they support each other—whether through sharing advice, having a chat, or being kind.

A guest from The Shoebox Community Hub reflected on how the activity highlighted the value of noticing small moments—smiles, conversations, gestures—that can make a big difference:

'I particularly loved the evaluation activity at the end with the ornament. It was very sweet. It's nice to have the opportunity to share and to actually say out loud that you've connected with someone. Sometimes people might think that connection isn't mutual, but saying it aloud helps people feel appreciated and realise they have more of an impact than they might think. All it takes is one comment or one smile to make a difference. That kind of acknowledgment makes it feel special.'

One of the New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing is "to give," so it was valuable to include an element of this in the evaluation process (New Economics Foundation, 2008). Evaluation is not just about gathering feedback to improve projects—it is also about recognising the value of these experiences and the impact they have on people's lives.

Session outline 6: Printing and manuscripts

The group learned about medieval texts, tried writing with quills, and designed illuminated letters

Evaluation method: Collaborative newspaper page

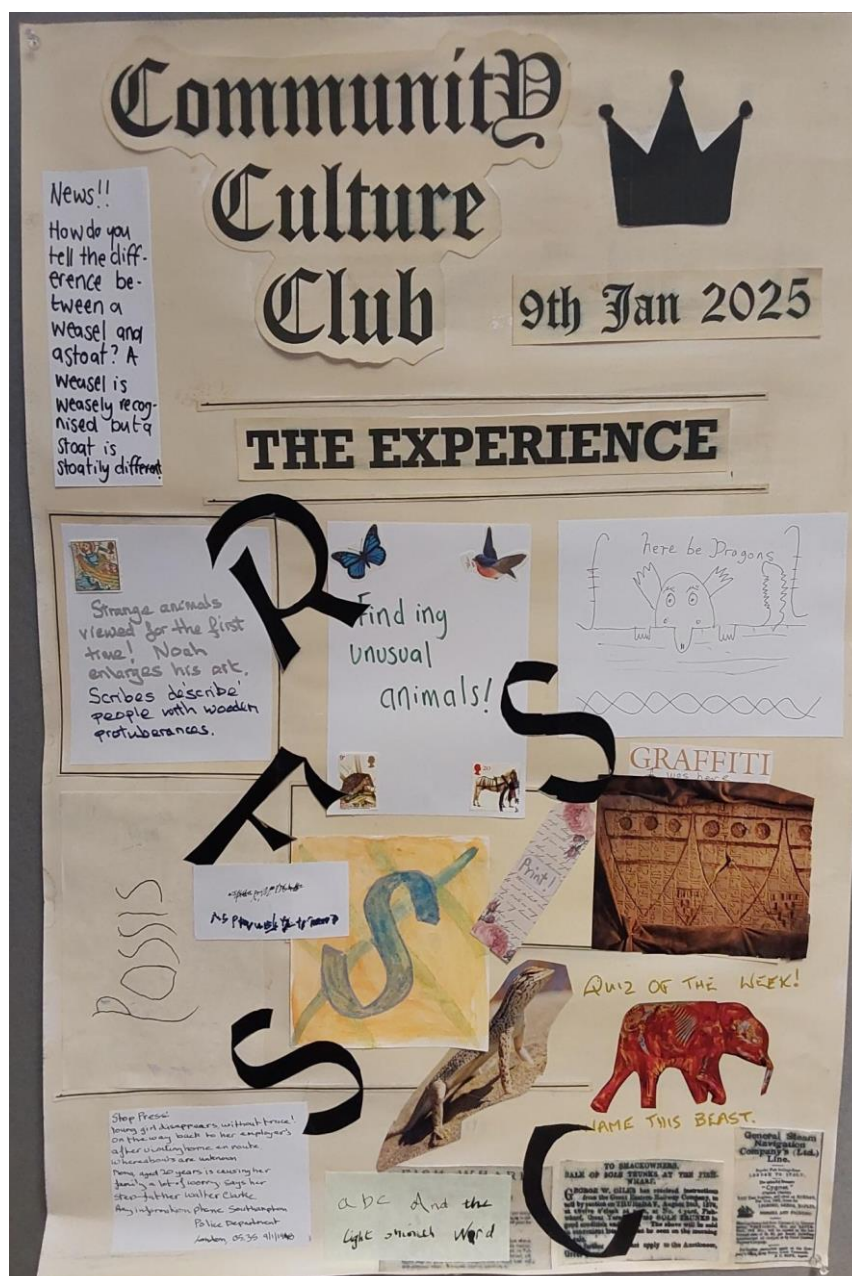
Participants contribute thoughts to a large-scale newspaper front page using collage, drawing and writing.

Evaluation tools

A1 pre-prepared newspaper sheet, collage materials

Evaluation question

What was something new or interesting you learned today?



Comments

This newspaper evaluation activity was well-received. Participants enjoyed working together on a large collaborative piece that allowed them to respond in different ways. This year, we introduced pre-cut stickers alongside traditional collage materials, making it more accessible for those who found cutting difficult. The mix of materials meant everyone could take part in a way that suited them.

One participant wrote a news article about their mum leaving service as a young woman, which was particularly touching and insightful. It also showed a willingness to share and open up to the group, reinforcing the session's focus on storytelling and personal connection.

Overall, the activity was successful, providing a creative and engaging way for participants to share their thoughts and experiences. The newspaper itself can be publicly displayed, helping to showcase learning from the sessions as the programme progresses. It also has the potential as an ongoing evaluation tool, with additions made at the end of each session.

One limitation is that responses are restricted to what is recorded within the newspaper itself. If there were more time, a recorded discussion about participants' choices could add depth to the evaluation, capturing more of their reflections in the moment.

Session outline 7: Tiny tales

Participants explored miniature objects, discussed childhood toys, and created their own tiny peg dolls.

Evaluation method: Tiny letters

Participants write reflections on miniature paper and post them in a small post-box using the peg dolls they created in the session to post them.

Evaluation tools

Envelopes, tiny paper, miniature post-box

Evaluation question

Is there anything you would change about these sessions?

Participants shared several helpful suggestions to improve the sessions, including:

- 'More sessions, visits from guests to talk about records office, e.g., house research. Session on weaving, Amelia Opie, opposition to slavery'
- 'Thursdays was a hard choice; it's the day we have coffee and meet with everyone on site.'
- 'If it could start a little later, e.g., 11 AM, that would be fab (it takes us a long time to get out of the house). It is an amazing session, and we love it.'



Comments

This evaluation method worked well and was kept the same as last year. It provided useful feedback for the programme lead and artist facilitator—some suggestions could be implemented in upcoming sessions, while others would inform next year's planning. Participants were made aware that their feedback would be used in this way and were encouraged to share any issues, as honest reflections help improve the programme. However, as with other writing-based evaluations, some participants, particularly those living with dementia, found it challenging to write their responses.

During this evaluation, a participant living with dementia approached me, wanting to express how important the group was to him. His body language conveyed the depth of his feelings before he even spoke. 'I used to speak very, very well, that's gone to pot. Is it the things that we do? There is a lot of stuff. And this sort of working -' (he points to everyone in the group one by one). I ask him if he means the communication aspect of being together, and he says, 'yes'.

This moment reinforced how valuable it is to give people space and time to reflect on their experiences. Not everyone will engage through written responses, but ensuring there are different ways for participants to share their thoughts—whether through conversation, movement, or being present—remains key to an inclusive and meaningful evaluation process.

Session outline 8: Shoes

A look at Norwich's shoe industry with object-handling, making shoe-themed bunting and a visit to the gallery to see the museum's extensive shoe collection.

Evaluation method: Shoe printing

Participants use real baby and children's shoes to visually represent their journey within the group and how that makes them feel. They stamp the shoes onto large paper while sharing and reflecting on their experiences together.

Evaluation tools

Baby shoes, stamping ink, large paper

Evaluation question

How has your journey with this group felt so far, and what has it meant to you?

Participants were asked to print using small shoes on large paper to symbolise their journeys with the club so far. After the activity, they shared their reflections in a group discussion. The goal was to explore how the programme has impacted their lives and personal journeys.

- 'Last week, as we were going home, [my partner] thought it was the last session, and he was so sad about it. Yeah, it's been fabulous. I remember every time we came out, it was like, "Gosh, it's Culture Club tomorrow!" I'd get really excited. It's lovely to see everybody and learn about things in the museum, and discover more about the people coming here. We like that, the talking and learning about things in the museum but also learning about other people that are coming is also really nice.'
- 'I think at the start of the journey none of us knew each other and we began to sort of delve together. Then when it came to the break at Christmas, we missed it—really, really missed it—because all the clubs and everything shut down. So, there was nothing to exercise our minds. Coming here, you learn from each other. You learn from yourselves, the people taking the group, and it's good. If you've got some knowledge, you can communicate it to somebody else, and if they've got knowledge, they can communicate it to you. Coming here is really valuable. You learn from each other, share knowledge, and discover things about yourself. It's been wonderful.'
- 'I started off with a very personal, kind of couples-based perspective. We did our footsteps together to show that we're on this journey together, and eventually, we would meet in the middle. We'd meet other people and become a larger community with a common purpose. It's been so, so worthwhile and hugely enriching, I think.'



Comments

The shoe-printing activity was a strong visual and reflective tool, helping participants to express their experiences in a creative way. The final piece, resembling a coastline or contour map, became a shared representation of the group's connections and personal journeys. The process encouraged deep reflections, with many expressing how much the group meant to them.

The footprints became a powerful way to illustrate these connections. One participant used them to map a journey with their partner, showing how their paths had merged with others in the group over time. This reinforced how shared experiences can turn an individual journey into a collective one, where relationships and mutual support grow naturally. Another participant reflected on how much they missed the group during breaks, showing the emotional impact of the sessions.

This evaluation method worked well in bringing out layered responses. Participants were not simply recalling their experience—they were representing it visually, which encouraged more personal and meaningful reflections. It also strengthened group cohesion, as participants saw their journeys alongside other people, reinforcing their sense of belonging. Expressing appreciation for others can take confidence, and this activity provided a way for people to do that with no need to say it outright.

Going forward, this activity could be developed by allowing more time for discussion, ensuring everyone has a chance to reflect. The visual nature of the activity made it accessible for all, including those who may not feel comfortable sharing verbally. It could also be interesting to revisit the footprints at the end of a future programme, using them to reflect on long-term personal growth and change.

Session outline 9: Courtly love

A session on romance and Valentine's Day history, exploring love tokens and medieval etiquette.

Evaluation method: Reflection box

Participants place an imaginary gift in a box to represent what they hope to carry forward.



Evaluation tools

Small empty decorative cardboard boxes

Evaluation question

What do you hope to continue doing with friends after the programme?

I asked participants to imagine putting something meaningful into a Jack Valentine's Box of Hopes—something they wanted to take forward from the group, like connection, learning, or memories. They could share their thoughts out loud or just reflect silently.

- 'Future connection, because I really need it. We put our details forward, and I'd love to keep in touch. Last week, we put a pair of feet on something to show that we came as a couple, but in the middle, we were meeting up with you. That was symbolic of what we'd like to do in the future. So yes, please do stay in touch with us.'
- 'I'm not very good at these sorts of things. I find it... sometimes my words don't come out right. I've been really pleased with how everyone has worked together. I feel it, like warmth. Yes. I'd definitely like to continue meeting up with people afterwards. It's wonderful to be in this kind of environment. I wouldn't have sat down and done this otherwise. It's taken me out of my comfort zone a little, but I've been comfortable with it. I wasn't uncomfortable, but I wouldn't have done these things otherwise. Life gets busy—I have a lot of other interests.'
- 'Me time, because that's important to me. Sharing my knowledge, enjoying time with others. I feel like we're all on the same page. Being new to the city, it's been hard to make friends, but this has been a really good way. Even at the bus stop, we see familiar faces—it makes a difference. I'd love to meet for coffee and chat, see how people are doing. It feels like it's become part of our lives.'

Comments

The new box-of-hopes exercise allowed participants to reflect on what they had gained from the group and what they wanted to take forward. It encouraged responses that were both personal and forward-looking, helping people think beyond the sessions themselves. The open-ended nature of the exercise meant participants could interpret it in different ways, leading to thoughtful and varied reflections.

The quotes above highlight how the method worked well in drawing out meaningful responses. One participant linked their box of hopes to a previous footprint exercise, reinforcing the theme of connection and continuity. Another reflected on how the group had pushed them out of their comfort zone in a way that felt safe and enjoyable, showing how the evaluation method helped surface reflections that may not have been shared otherwise.

Because there was no pressure to write anything down, participants could engage in a way that felt natural to them. This made it particularly inclusive. However, one person living with dementia found the exercise too abstract, which I had expected as a possibility. Using physical objects, like small charms, could make it more accessible next time, but this might take away the open-ended nature that made the activity so effective.

To close the activity, I said, 'Now, just take a moment to close your box. Even if you didn't say it out loud, hold your hopes inside. These boxes represent the friendships and connections we've built together.' This added a ritualistic element, echoing how many of the sessions also include a ritualistic element. People responded well to this, and by this stage in the programme, evaluation felt like a natural and valued part of the sessions, helping to reflect on and bring closure to the group's experiences.

Session outline 10: Portraiture

Participants examined historical portraits and created their own using collage and a polaroid camera.

Evaluation method: Collage and reflection

Participants create surrealist collages representing their experience, paired with recorded quotes

Evaluation tools

Cut-out collage materials, recording device for participant quote

Evaluation question

What does being part of this group mean to you?



Examples of some responses recorded whilst the participants were making their collages and the finished responses:

- 'No matter how I was feeling when I got up, say this morning, when I get here, all that goes away. It really becomes enjoyable, spending time with people. It helps my mental health now.'
- 'I felt free to do stuff and just be, and that's nice because that's rare. We've done some arts, some making, some learning. My collage is meant to depict teaching and learning. We've had people of all sorts and all sorts of colours of hair, which is lovely [she is pointing to an image of a lady with coloured hair]. One of the things I chose when we were looking at our favourite things was the parasol, and that's the bit I've got to so far—it's not finished.'
- 'Bella Gloria is a brand based on dreams [this is an image on her collage], and this has awakened all sorts of dreams. I'm not going to say much more because I should cry—it's been so lovely. I really enjoyed meeting this group of people.'
- 'A lot of people have given in many ways. In some ways, it's very simple, but that doesn't mean it's not good. Home-made—I just like that and real life. And I don't know, that's been such a good thing.'



One improvement for next time would be providing more pre-cut words for participants to use in their collages, rather than relying on magazines. This would make it easier for people to add text that reflects their thoughts. A collaborative group collage at the end of the programme might also work better than individual pieces, helping to bring everything together. The newspaper activity from the print session could be moved here instead, creating a front page that captures the whole programme.

Balancing evaluation activities with session themes and timing is always a challenge, but this approach worked well overall. It gave people space to reflect, respond creatively, and share their experiences in their own way.

Conclusion

This year's evaluation approach built on what worked well while making changes based on feedback. By embedding evaluation into creative activities, it felt like a natural part of the sessions rather than an extra task. This made it easier for people to engage and led to more meaningful responses.

One of the biggest takeaways is that flexibility is key. Some participants responded well to structured reflection activities, while others preferred open discussions or sensory-based methods. Even when evaluation tools remained the same, responses varied depending on the group's needs. There is no perfect way to evaluate a programme like this—adjustments will always be needed. Object-based approaches encouraged thoughtful responses without feeling forced, but written elements were still a barrier for some, so providing verbal and visual alternatives will remain a priority.

The adapted wellbeing scale was a useful change. It was easier for participants to use, but it also showed the limits of standardised measures in capturing personal experiences. Wellbeing is shaped by factors beyond the programme, so while the scale is helpful, it should sit alongside more personal, qualitative approaches.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on making evaluation even more inclusive, ensuring that everyone has different ways to share their thoughts. Giving participants more input into how evaluation is conducted will also be important. The small but powerful moments shared in feedback this year shows just how much the group means to people, and that's something to build on.

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