

COMMUNITY CULTURE CLUB EVALUATION REPORT: 2024-2025



Holly Sandiford
Creative Evaluator



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



Community Culture Club is a ten week creative wellbeing programme for older adults (65+) based at the Museum of Norwich, which runs during the winter months. It aims to help people feel more connected, improve wellbeing, and explore history and creativity in a welcoming space.

The overarching aim of the programme is to **build a lasting sense of community** among participants by creating a supportive environment where they can develop meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging. By encouraging connections, the programme aims to reduce loneliness and promote ongoing social engagement.

The programme is jointly funded by Norfolk Museums Service and the Norfolk Initiative for Coastal and Rural Health Equalities (NICHE).

METHODOLOGY

The External Creative Evaluator – Holly Sandiford

This evaluation was designed and conducted by Holly Sandiford, a creative evaluator, artist, and facilitator with over 25 years of experience in arts, health, and wellbeing. Holly has worked across museums, galleries, community organisations, and health services, designing and delivering creative evaluation frameworks that ensure participant voices are central to learning and impact assessment.

Holly's approach to evaluation is non-extractive, meaning that participants are active contributors rather than passive subjects. She aims to make evaluation a positive, engaging, and enjoyable process.

By embedding herself in the programme, she was able to document lived experiences as they unfolded, rather than relying on retrospective feedback alone.

Holly's post was kindly funded by the Norfolk Initiative for Coastal and Rural Health Equalities (NICHE). NICHE is funded by Health Education England (East of England) to support Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System to co-create projects that will help to recruit, develop and retain the health and social care workforce and improve services to meet the needs of the local communities it serves.



Message in a bottle evaluation activity

Reflective Positioning in the Evaluation

As an evaluator, Holly adopts a participant-observer approach, meaning she engages actively in sessions while maintaining a reflective, analytical perspective. This allows her to build trust and rapport with participants while capturing nuanced insights into their experiences.

A logic model guided the evaluation, identifying key research questions and required evidence. This reflective process evolved throughout to adapt to participants' needs and feedback.

The evaluation follows principles co-designed by The Centre for Cultural Value:

- Beneficial: Ensuring the evaluation meets our needs and those of stakeholders.
- Robust: Using appropriate, rigorous methods focused on learning.
- People-centred: Including diverse perspectives for deeper insights.
- Connected: Enabling shared learning and collaboration.



Tiny feedback letters which were then posted into a tiny letterbox!

Evaluation Methods

- Observation – Noting social connections, emotions, and sense of belonging, with quotes, photos, and recordings.
- Object-Based Reflection – Choosing objects or words to spark discussion and storytelling.
- Collage and Art – Creating individual or group collages to express experiences.
- Collaborative Making – Working together on shared artworks like woven collages or printed pieces.
- Symbolic Activities – Using objects (e.g., baubles, bottles, boxes) to represent connections and reflections.
- Writing Reflections – Short written responses, letters, or messages shared in creative ways.
- Group Discussions – Talking about experiences of the programme.
- Wellbeing – Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale - Intellectual Disability version (WEMWBS-ID)
- Facilitator Reflection – Debriefs with the team and possible follow-up sessions.



Using collage as an evaluation method

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Community Culture Club aims to:

- **Reduce loneliness** and help people form new friendships.
- **Offer creative, hands-on activities** to explore history in a fun way.
- **Make museum spaces feel welcoming** for people who might not usually visit.
- **Be inclusive and accessible** to older people, carers, and those with dementia.
- **Encourage lasting engagement** with cultural and creative activities beyond the programme.

The overarching aim is to build a lasting sense of community

Community Culture Club is co-delivered by Rosalind Hewett (Programme Lead), Susie Childerhouse (Artist Facilitator), and Holly Sandiford (External Creative Evaluator).

Integration of the Creative Health Quality Framework (CHQ Framework):

This evaluation aligns with the Creative Health Quality Framework, ensuring the programme is **person-centred, equitable, safe, creative, collaborative, realistic, reflective, and sustainable**. Each section will conclude with an assessment of the programme's performance against this framework.

HOW IT MET THE AIMS

1. Reduce loneliness and help people form new friendships

A core aim of the programme is to reduce loneliness and facilitate meaningful social connections. Many participants joined the sessions seeking new ways to interact, often expressing feelings of isolation in their daily lives. One commented, **'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 really important for your mental health.'**

The structured yet informal setting provides a comfortable space where people can engage with others at their own pace. **'We really look forward to the group, because it's such a lovely activity, but it's just lovely being part of the group.'**

To prepare for their first session, participants were asked to bring a self-representative object from home. They then shared this with the group, which built connections by encouraging people to share personal experiences. During the session's evaluation, one participant noted that this activity helped them bond with the group more quickly.



Participants helping each other with 'beer mat weaving', an introductory activity

Throughout the ten weeks, warmth and camaraderie gradually replaced initial hesitation and social anxiety. Early on, participants were more subdued. However, by the fourth session, conversation was flowing. Many were arriving early, staying late, and sharing details about their lives outside the programme. One participant reflected, **'I used to go days without speaking to anyone. Now I have something to look forward to'** and another said **'It's a confidence boost to know you're relevant to people.'**

By week six, participants were forming friendships that extended beyond the programme. Attendees were meeting outside of sessions, continuing conversations, and making plans to visit new cultural spaces together. One participant shared, **'We're thinking of going to Mabel Road Day Centre together next week, and that makes it easier to go knowing I won't be alone'** and **'We can consider ourselves to be a community, but we've also joined a new community in Norwich, and it's nice to get to know a lot of people, and everybody seems so friendly.'**

It was also observed that some of the quietest participants at the start were initiating conversations by the final weeks. One participant, for example, went from feeling uncertain about the group to actively inviting others for coffee, marking a personal breakthrough in social confidence. They said, **'I wasn't sure what to say at first, but I've enjoyed it. Things are starting to thaw out a bit now.'**



Example from a creative evaluation expressing how a couple were walking the path together but wanting to meet new friends at the club

2. Offer creative, hands-on activities to explore history in a fun way

Creativity is central to the programme, allowing participants to engage with history through interactive, hands-on sensory experiences. Activities range from printmaking, collage, storytelling, and object-handling, all designed to be accessible and to make history more tangible and personal. The lead facilitator Susie's drama background came to the fore here as she brought stories to life with her evocative and engaging storytelling, **'I normally don't retain certain things, but you've brought them to life.'**

Sessions often involve handling objects from the museum's collection. In a session about the history of shoes one participant shared, **'Holding that shoe reminded me of my grandmother's stories about working in a shoe factory.'** This led to broader discussions about work, family, and how historical objects carry personal and collective memories.

The creative activities themselves are achievable and accessible. One example is printing on clay using lace. In this way, creative pursuits provide an alternative for those who feel less comfortable expressing themselves verbally. Many participants expressed surprise at how much they enjoyed the creative components, with one noting, **'I hadn't done anything artistic in years, but this felt really freeing.'**



Participant painting a clay bowl

Participants also discussed the calming and mindfulness benefits of the craft activities, **'The craft ideas are so mindful, lets your mind wander when your hand is involved.'**

The diversity and quality of activities came up repeatedly in the evaluation process. In each session there is a simple opening activity, one or two main creative activities and the evaluation activities were often arts-based. This variety of engagements means there are more chances of people finding an activity they connect with in a session.

'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'

'Reflection-memories-beer mat weaving-doodling-loom'

'Enjoyed lots of activities, weaving and drawing'

'I enjoyed meeting new people and painting, seeing the loom'

'I love the different ways of evaluating, it is usually boring and brings you down a bit'

Participants talk about the activities they enjoyed

Creative Health Quality Framework: Creative

Creativity is central to the programme, allowing participants to engage with history through interactive, hands-on sensory experiences.

The variety of creative methods, including printmaking, collage, storytelling, and object-handling, ensures accessibility and engagement.



Participant creating her own tiny miniature doll

One participant spoke about how being with other people in the programme was supporting her mental health, **'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.'**

In a creative evaluation, participants chose objects to represent their workshop takeaways. One participant selected a key to represent beginning a new chapter, forming friendships, and embracing new experiences. Another selected twine, because it reminded her of **'keeping things together'** and the group's bond, showing how they support each other and maintain connections.

Each week Community Culture Club hosts professional guests. These are either people for whom attending a session serves as CPD, or for people from relevant organisations for our participants. This allows us to share our model, and also gives our participants the chance to hear about other support services available to them.

Guests noted the **'warm'** feeling taking part in the Culture Club gave them, **'I had the best time, I came away feeling so very warm inside—it really is amazing work you're doing! I got a bit emotional at the end of the session, and I'm so grateful to have been a part of it!'** - Jasmine

Creative Health Quality Framework: Person-Centred

The programme encourages self-expression through creative evaluation activities like object-sharing, clay, and printmaking. This provides participants with opportunities to share personal stories in meaningful ways. One participant, initially hesitant, became increasingly engaged as sessions progressed.



Expressive painting

3. Make museum spaces feel welcoming for people who might not usually visit

A key aim of the programme is to make museums more inclusive and approachable, particularly for those who may not have previously engaged with cultural spaces.

Participants commented on initially feeling unsure about accessing the museum and how the programme had helped put them at ease. **'Feeling secure physically in knowing my way around. More at ease asking (silly) questions of professionals and visitors.'** and **'I was unsure at first. Everyone was so friendly that we felt at ease.'**

At the end of the first session, one participant spoke about the warm welcome she had experienced. ***'It's so nice to come somewhere so warm and welcoming, especially knowing someone here already.'***

Sally, a guest from The Shoebox Community Hub, commented **'For older people, I think being in the museum is particularly beneficial. It gets them out and about to a space in the city centre that feels lively and inclusive. Seeing people of different ages, including children and other groups, fosters intergenerational communication, which is so important.'**

By the fifth week, attendees were arriving early and staying late to explore exhibitions independently, a shift from initial sessions where many expressed discomfort in museum spaces. One participant reflected, **'I hadn't been to a museum in years, but now it feels like a place I belong.'**



Participants engaging with the museum's cracker collection

Others shared that they now felt confident visiting the museum alone or with family, something they would not have considered before the programme. **'I'm beginning to know my way around. I think it's always the people in a museum that make you feel at home.'**

Having simple opening activities at the beginning of each session quickly put participants at ease as it gave them something to focus on. This was especially important in the first few weeks. After that people were much more confident in engaging with others and seemed to relish the opportunity to chat amongst themselves.

Engaging with museum collections in a social and hands-on way encouraged participants to reframe their view of museums. Rather than seeing them as places to passively observe objects, participants found the museum could be a space for social interaction, shared learning, and even fun.

One participant commented, **'Being in the museum adds something unique —surrounded by history, with knowledgeable staff connecting historical items to the session's themes.'**

And another said, **'Enjoyment. We've really enjoyed coming. I'm not a crafty person at all, but I've actually loved it. The learning has been great. Normally, I don't retain certain things, but you've brought them to life. It could go either way. It would be nice if we met up at the museum, had a wander, and then went for coffee to reminisce about what we've seen. So we're keeping on learning.'**

The museum's free five-year passes also prompted many to discuss future visits. They were happy to find that they could bring three free visitors on each pass. For example **'I intend to bring our daughter and grandchildren.'**

Creative Health Quality Framework: Equitable & Safe

The programme is structured to ensure accessibility. Adapted activities, such as verbal instead of written evaluations, make participation more inclusive. Participants with dementia or mobility concerns are supported, ensuring full engagement.

4. Be inclusive and accessible to older people, carers, and those with dementia

The programme is inclusive and adaptable, ensuring older adults, carers, and individuals with dementia can take part comfortably. One participant said, **'Nobody's pressured... everyone's allowed to go at their own speed'**. Facilitators carefully considered sensory needs, mobility support, and alternative participation methods to ensure everyone felt welcome.

The multisensory design of the sessions was very effective. Participants had profound responses to tactile, olfactory, and taste activities. For example, sampling chocolate, smelling spices like cloves, cinnamon, and star anise, essential oils, fresh herbs, dried oranges, cloves, and nutmeg. These sparked nostalgic memories. One participant noted, **'These sensory elements are so important, they transport you back in time.'**

One carer reflected, **'This was the first time in a long time that we could enjoy something together without worry. Everything was adapted so naturally, and that made a huge difference.'** Structured but flexible approaches allowed participants with cognitive impairments to engage fully, whether through verbal discussion, hands-on creation, or quiet observation.



Just one of the many sensory elements of the programme, making pomanders from oranges and cloves

The programme is shaped by best practices from the Alzheimer's Society, focusing on structure and routine. The sessions take place weekly in the same room at the same time and facilitators wear the same clothes each week. This helps people feel comfortable, and may help those living with dementia to recognise staff and know what to expect.

Peer support plays a significant role in inclusion, with participants supporting each other to be fully involved.

The reflective nature of the programme, which includes a creative evaluation activity at the end of each session and a debrief after every session, means that any small issues are discussed and adjusted in real time. No matter how well you plan, a truly person-centred approach involves discovering what matters most to each individual, rather than assuming their needs.

Peggy Hughes from the National Centre for Writing, who attended a session as a guest, said about the programme, **'Rosalind invited me along, and I was really keen just to see how other organisations do work like this, but also to spend time in a different way. It was lovely and varied. It didn't feel long, and everybody was really engaged and clearly very comfortable with each other and with Susie and with you also.'**

Creative Health Quality Framework: Equitable & Safe

The relaxed facilitation style ensures that people feel at ease and are not pressured into participation. Discussions are steered away from distressing topics, ensuring a positive atmosphere. Facilitators also provide emotional support when participants need it.



More sensory experiences with pomegranates, cloves and cinnamon bark

5. Encourage lasting engagement with cultural and creative activities beyond the programme

A key goal is to inspire participants to continue cultural engagement beyond the programme. By the final sessions, many had already begun planning their next steps, some intending to visit other museum exhibitions, while others signed up for creative workshops. One, who had just moved to the city, said **'This group has been a stepping stone to help me find my way around Norwich.'**

Another participant expressed excitement about joining a new writing group that was introduced by a guest, while someone else became inspired by the crafts they enjoyed during the sessions and joined a monthly craft group. A caregiver, whose partner is living with dementia, tried some of their favourite Community Culture Club crafts at home.

One participant shared, **'I'd love to visit other museums now. I've started keeping a list of places I want to see.'** Several attendees also planned to return to the museum together, reinforcing the programme's success in building up independent cultural confidence, **'It would be nice if we met up at the museum, had a wander, and then went for coffee to reminisce about what we've seen.'** Being given free, five-year museum passes removes the paywall potentially deterring people from returning.

Many participants discovered new interests and confidence through the programme, particularly in craft and storytelling. One commented, **'I always thought I wasn't artistic, but now I realise it's just about having a go.'**

Creative Health Quality Framework: Sustainable & Collaborative

The programme successfully established new social networks, with participants staying in touch after the sessions ended. Links to other local groups, such as MensCraft, the National Centre for Writing, and The Shoebox, encourage continued engagement. Directly meeting with representatives from these organisations and hearing about their activities proves a highly effective way to encourage participants to start new groups, especially as they might go with others from Community Culture Club.

Fulfilling the Overarching Aim: Building a Lasting Sense of Community

The overarching goal of Community Culture Club is to create a space where participants can develop a sense of belonging and connection that extends beyond the programme itself. Noticing these community-building efforts, a participant shared, **'We're in a really nice historical place and also you're building communities, which is huge, especially for people in this demographic.'**

They also spoke of a sense of '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.'**

Participants shared that the sessions provided an anchor point in their week, giving them something to look forward to. One person described it as **'a reason to get out of the house and meet people, something I didn't have before'**. Another said, **'Even on days when I wasn't feeling great, I knew coming here would lift my spirits.'**

A key indicator of success is that many participants continued meeting after the programme ended. Several formed friendships, exchanging contact details and arranging meet-ups. One participant reflected, **'I now have a group of people I feel comfortable messaging for a coffee or a walk. That's a huge change for me.'**

Others spoke about how the experience had changed their relationship with the museum. **'Before, I saw museums as places where you had to be quiet and look at things from a distance. Now, I feel like I'm part of it'**, one participant shared. Another noted, **'This place feels like a home now. I know I can come back, and I'll always feel welcome.'** By embedding a strong sense of community, ownership, and belonging, the programme successfully achieved its overarching aim.

THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

The role of the facilitators and programme management

The success of the programme is due to the expertise of Rosalind, the programme lead, and of Susie, the artist facilitator.

One participant commented on the **'support by kind and empathic group leaders.'**

Rosalind plays a key role in planning and ensuring the smooth running of the programme. She coordinates logistics, makes sure accessibility needs are met, and ensures that participants' feedback shapes the programme as it progresses.

Rosalind's meticulous behind-the-scenes planning was noticed multiple times by participants. One said, **'I always felt looked after—Rosalind was always there to check in and make sure we had what we needed'**, and another said **'Rosalind, thank you for always making sure we felt welcome. You took the time to check in with everyone, and that made a difference'**, another said during a creative evaluation activity, **'This is for you, Rosalind. It's full of sugar and spice and all things nice, and a lot of butterflies because you flicker about. It's what it's done for me.'** and lastly, **'You think of everything!'**



Beautiful fruit provided by Rosalind for the group each week

Susie is an exceptional facilitator who, with her background in creative facilitation, teaching, and drama, is able to tailor activities to accommodate the diverse abilities of participants. She creates an inclusive space where people feel comfortable engaging at their own pace. One participant described her as **'a calming presence who knew exactly how to guide us without making us feel pressured.'** Another said, **Susie's ability to make everyone feel like they belonged was incredible. She brought out creativity in all of us.'** Another said, **'I laughed and had a great time'.** Humour was a recurring theme in discussions, reminding everyone of the significance of laughter for wellbeing, which was abundant throughout the sessions.

'Susie, you are so inspiring, and you know so much about things, and you are so enthusiastic.'

'Susie, you really made this space fun and engaging. You have such a way of explaining things that makes it feel like a story rather than just facts.'

Susie and Rosalind's combined skills help create an environment that is supportive, engaging, and responsive to participants' needs.

Creative Health Quality Framework: Reflective & Realistic

Facilitators regularly reflected on session dynamics with the external evaluator and adjusted activities accordingly. Pacing and adaptability were also considered. For example, facilitators ensured sessions allowed enough time for meaningful interactions without overwhelming participants.



Susie and her engaging facilitation style

MEASURING WELLBEING

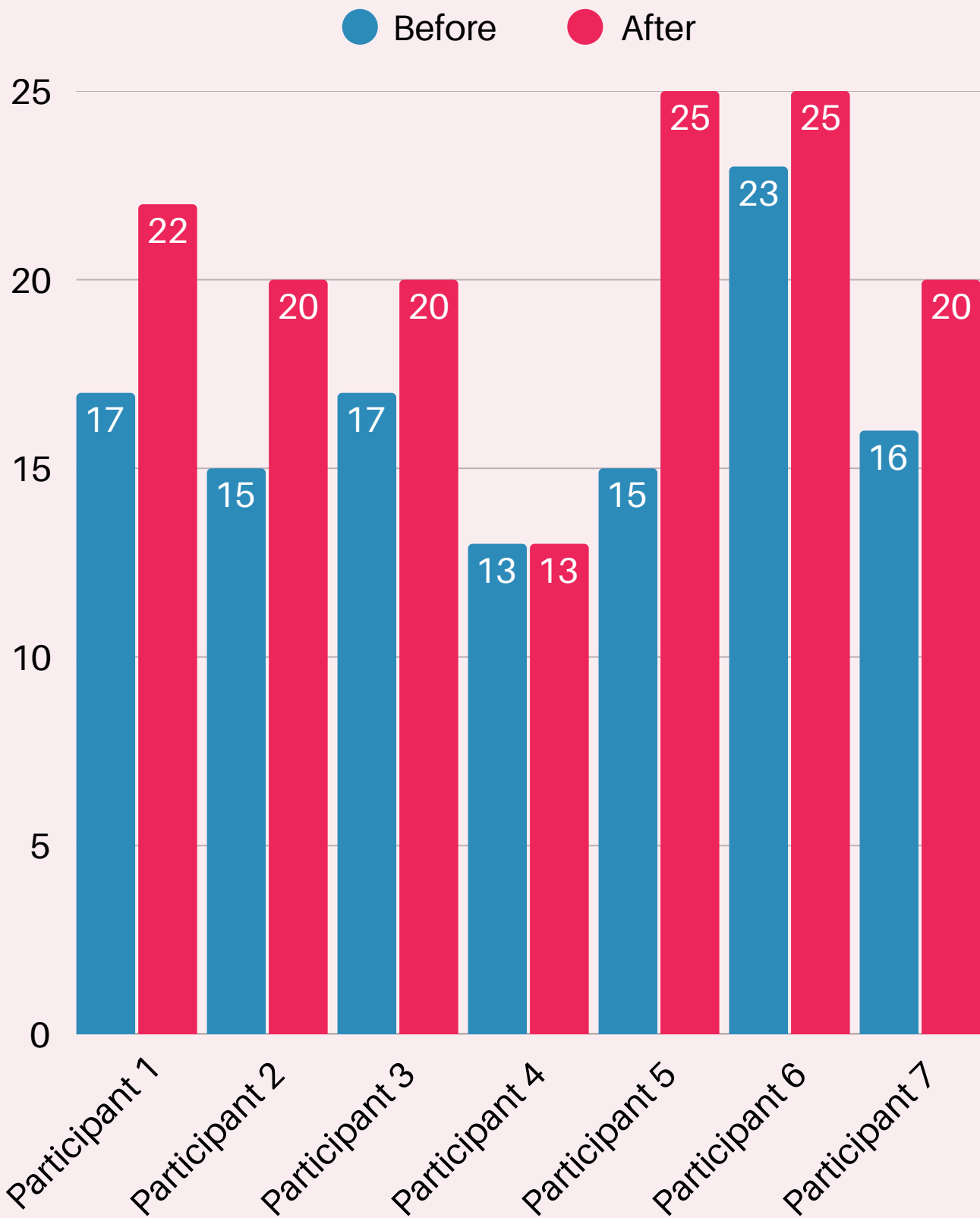
METRICS FOR ASSESSING IMPACT

The new Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale - Intellectual Disability version (WEMWBS-ID) was utilised on the first and last session. This has been specifically adapted for those with learning needs to make it more appropriate for those in the group living with dementia.

Participant	Beginning	End	Change +
1	17	22	+5
2	15	20	+5
3	17	20	+3
4	13	13	0
5	15	25	+10
6	16	20	+4
7	23	25	+2

Possible total scores on the WEMWBS-ID range from 0 to 28, with a higher score indicating higher levels of mental wellbeing.

The adaptations to the original scale mean that it is not possible to compare ID and general population samples.



The WEMWBS-ID results show a clear improvement in participants' wellbeing over the ten weeks of Community Culture Club.

Six out of seven participants saw their scores rise, with increases ranging from +2 to +10. The biggest change was a 10-point increase, showing a strong boost in wellbeing, while one participant's score remained the same which suggests sustained wellbeing. These findings reflect the wider feedback from participants, many of whom spoke about feeling more socially connected and confident.

These participants summed up the impact nicely, saying,
'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 definitely have an affinity. That first session when everyone shares something about themselves, maybe a bit outside of this group, it's just like, oh, you know, all people. And it's that lovely feeling of those connections.'

'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.'

The mix of creative activities, social interaction, and a welcoming space clearly played a key role in these positive changes, helping to build a lasting sense of community.

CONCLUSION

Community Culture Club is more than just a creative programme—it is a space for people to build relationships, express themselves, and feel valued. Through a combination of creative engagement, social connection, and accessible facilitation, participants form friendships, gain confidence, and deepen their connection to cultural spaces.

Creative Health Quality Framework Framework: Reflective & Sustainable

The programme encourages ongoing engagement with culture and creativity, ensuring a lasting impact beyond its ten week duration. Participants develop a sense of belonging, with many planning to continue social and cultural activities beyond the programme.

One participant summarised, **'I never knew a museum could feel so welcoming. I feel like I belong here now.'** Another reflected, **'This is more than just a group—it's become a little family.'**

The evaluation highlights the importance of museums as inclusive community spaces, particularly for older adults, carers, and those facing social isolation. It also shows how embedding creative evaluation improves cultural programmes' wellbeing and engagement.

NEXT STEPS

- **Sustaining Impact:** Encouraging participants to stay connected through informal meet-ups or structured follow-up activities.
- **Sector Learning:** Sharing insights with other museums and cultural organisations to inform best practices in **community-led creative health initiatives**.
- **Funding & Growth:** Exploring opportunities for future funding to build on this success and develop further intergenerational and participatory programmes.

'We're going to miss this like crazy. We have really, really loved it so much.'



Word cloud generated from the evaluation feedback

THANK YOU



CONTACT INFORMATION FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES

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