



**CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CULTURE,
HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN TORBAY
ARTS ON REFERRAL PILOT PROGRAMME 2016-18**

**ARTS AND OLDER PEOPLE'S MENTAL
HEALTH STRAND CASE STUDY**

**OUTCOMES FROM TWO 12-WEEK PROJECTS,
ONE IN RADIO DRAMA AND THE OTHER MIXED MEDIA ARTS**

TORBAY CULTURE

BECAUSE IT MATTERS | EST. 2015

Summary

Mental health and wellbeing needs have been increasing across the life course in recent years, including in older adults. Lower level needs often do not require specialist treatment, but nevertheless have a significant impact on quality of life*. Adults of older age with low level depression and/or anxiety needs were referred by Health & Wellbeing (HWB) Co-ordinators from Torbay Community Development Trust to one of two weekly projects running over 12 weeks: Soundlife (radio drama) and a mixed media arts project. Recruitment difficulties resulted in only seven regular attendees; however, of these over half had more than a 70% attendance; 85% of participants saw a positive shift in wellbeing and over 70% reported being more positive and less negative following their engagement.

Detail

This bio-psychosocial group-based intervention ran as an adjunct to support from the HWB Co-ordinators. Soundlife was delivered by Sound Communities and involved a small group of people using a wide variety of creative radio storytelling activities in different locations across Torbay, with community transport built into the project design. The mixed media arts project, delivered by Tony Lidington and Hugh Nankivell, included visual arts and writing poems, for which the arts practitioners helped participants write music. This project also offered an opportunity for participants to move outside a standard group intervention format, by going to see a performance at a local theatre.



Evaluation comprised baseline and end of cycle data collection in respect of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Health and Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) along with gathering qualitative evaluation responses from participants and practitioners.

In terms of intervention engagement, 57% of participants had more than a 70% attendance. There was a significant shift (more than three points) in the WEMWBS score for 85.7% of participants and an average increase across the cohort of +9 points, with greatest increase 14 points. In terms of PANAS, 71.4% of participants reported being more positive and less negative following their engagement.

Key aspects contributing to the success of the intervention were having:

- A strong Steering Group, comprising both clinicians and commissioners and including the care and voluntary sectors
- Consistently good engagement with the CCG Commissioner throughout
- Door to door transport for participants to mitigate some potential participation problems
- Activities which were structured to involve the whole group in opportunities for creative input, thinking, listening and expressing themselves

*<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-people-seeking-help>
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/fundamental-facts-about-mental-health-2016.pdf>

'It's made me happier and taken my mind of (sic) my aches and pains. It's given me something to think about other than my own problems. It's given me a better outlook as there's things I'll do now such as go that bit further on the train. It's helped me get out of my cocoon. I'd definitely be interested in carrying on with a similar activity.'

Participant

Participants reported enjoyment of the interventions, improved mood, increased social connection and for one, a profound re-connection to their creativity. This individual described how the immediate effect of one session was that they felt happier, more energised, positive and more motivated to go about their daily activities in comparison to their mood before they attended. As someone who often had very low mood, a tendency for depression, little energy, a negative outlook and an insular approach, isolating themselves 'for days on end to try to reject the world', the intervention led to them feeling better in their mental health, which led to how they were physically as well.

'It is clear to me that both participants have been transformed in this brief programme of work. They are both very thankful, but also much more confident individuals who are questioning some of their deep-held beliefs and attitudes to self and others.'
Practitioner

FACT FILE	
Purpose	To address the needs of adults of older age with low level depression and/or anxiety
Aims	To improve participants' activation and self-management of physical and mental health conditions To improve participants' confidence to meet new people and explore creative opportunities To improve participants' overall sense of wellbeing To reduce participants' social isolation and improved social connection
Artforms used	Radio storytelling and mixed media arts (including visual arts, poetry and music)
Project Partners	Torbay Culture Torbay Council (Public Health) NHS South Devon and Torbay CCG Torbay & South Devon Foundation Trust ICO Torbay Community Development Trust Torbay Culture and Arts Network
Funders	Arts Council England and the Health Foundation
Artists	Sound Communities Hugh Nankivell Tony Lidington
Participants	Eight older adults with low level depression and/or anxiety needs
Location	Torbay
Dates	Weekly sessions over 12 weeks in January – March 2018
Outcomes	Positive shift in wellbeing; more positive and less negative following engagement; and increased social connection
Evaluation	Warwick Edinburgh Mental Health and Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Also participant questionnaires and artist reflection logs. Evaluation report
Cost	Project cost: Cost per participant (all places taken): £668 Cost per participant (actual): £1526
Outputs	21 sessions 2 radio/audio pieces 2 audio recordings of sings/music 7 photographs of visual art/writing 1 piece of creative writing 1 piece of filmed material
Quality Indicators	Co-production with health partner; user engagement in project planning; recruitment of experienced artists; recommended rates of pay for artists; evaluation of the project
Keywords	Older Adults Mental Health Loneliness and Isolation Social prescribing