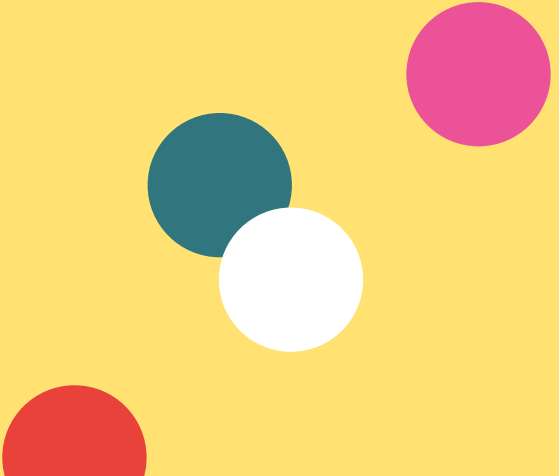


Pathways to Wellbeing: Creating a Culture of Care

Phase 3 Independent Evaluation Report
April 2023 – 2026



PATHWAYS TO
WELLBEING



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Foreword

As Head of Learning & Engagement at the Holburne Museum and founder of Pathways to Wellbeing, I am delighted to share this evaluation report which brings together three years of research and lived experience from our Pathways to Wellbeing community.

I would like to thank Dr Faye Sayer and Amy Luck from the International Centre for Heritage, University of Birmingham for their thoughtful and rigorous evaluation, and the participants, artists, volunteers, staff and heritage and health partners whose generosity and openness have made this evaluation possible.

The findings provide compelling evidence for something many of us have come to understand through years of shared practice: that creativity, cultural engagement and connection can profoundly shape people's lives. Through making art together, people find purpose, confidence, belonging and joy. They develop new skills, build meaningful relationships, discover different ways to express themselves, and begin to imagine new possibilities for who they are and who they might become.

This report adds to a growing body of national and international evidence¹ demonstrating the vital contribution of creative health to individual and collective wellbeing. Increasingly, research recognises creativity not simply as an enjoyable activity but as a health behaviour in its own right – one that supports resilience, connection and long-term wellbeing. As demand for mental health support continues to grow, programmes like Pathways to Wellbeing have an increasingly important role to play alongside statutory services, offering preventative, community-based opportunities that complement clinical care through creativity, culture and meaningful social connection.

As Pathways to Wellbeing marks its tenth anniversary, this evaluation offers an opportunity to reflect on what has enabled the programme not simply to endure, but to evolve, deepen and flourish. Central to its success has been embedding a whole-museum culture of care, where everyone – from volunteers and front-of-house staff to trustees and senior leadership – shares responsibility for creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.

A core principle of Pathways has always been that creativity should never be limited by circumstance or income. The programme is free, removing financial barriers that too often prevent people from participating in high-quality creative experiences and visiting museums. We believe everyone should have the opportunity not only to encounter art, but to make it – to think with their hands, express themselves creatively, feel they belong in cultural spaces, and experience the confidence, connection and wellbeing that creative practice can nurture.

In 2026, we celebrated this commitment through *The Shape of Care: Making Care Visible* – our third Pathways exhibition – and an accompanying symposium exploring the role of care in museums and communities. Together, they affirmed a simple but powerful truth: care is not transactional; it is relational. Care, expressed through creativity, generosity and shared experience, can create a lasting sense of connection and belonging. As one participant reflected:

“Being part of the museum provides a sense of safety – even if the group ended forever, the Holburne feels like a safe place.”

Looking ahead, we are committed not only to sustaining Pathways but to sharing what we have all learned along the way. Through establishing a new Creative Health & Heritage Network for Bath & North East Somerset, we hope to strengthen the creative health sector, support grassroots creative advocates and help expand equitable access to creativity beyond museum walls.

It is our hope that this report will not only demonstrate the impact of Pathways to Wellbeing but also inspire others to recognise the vital contribution that museums and cultural organisations can make to health, wellbeing and social connection.

Louise Campion
Head of Learning & Engagement
Holburne Museum, Bath

1. Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn, *What Is the Evidence on the Role of the Arts in Improving Health and Well-Being? A Scoping Review*, Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report 67 (Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2019) <https://www.jameelartshealthlab.org/research/research-projects/lancet-global-series-on-health-benefits-of-the-arts-2>



Image credit:
Natural Dyeing textiles project,
Gardener's Lodge Art Group, 2026

Executive Summary

Pathways to Wellbeing (PtW) is a museum-based creative health programme for adults and young people living in Bath & North East Somerset and the surrounding area who have lived experience of mild to moderate mental health challenges and social isolation. Now in its tenth year, the programme creates opportunities for people to support their mental health and wellbeing through high-quality creative experiences, cultural connection and being part of a supportive community. Participants join Pathways groups through referrals from primary and secondary care, signposting from community partners and self-referral.

The Holburne Museum is the home and lead partner for Pathways, providing the programme's management, administration and infrastructure and hosting the majority of its creative groups. Partnership is central to the programme: groups also work with the American Museum & Gardens and Bath Abbey, where participants are welcomed into cultural spaces and draw creative inspiration from their collections, buildings, stories and histories.

Across three years of evaluation, Pathways to Wellbeing has demonstrated a consistent, broad, and in many cases profound positive impact on the wellbeing of participants, staff, artists, and the wider community of organisations and professionals connected to the programme. It has performed strongly across the intended impacts. (see **Appendix 2 – PtW Theory of Change**)

Drawing on a robust mixed-method evaluation – including 88 matched wellbeing surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations and feedback from participants, referrers and partners – the findings provide compelling evidence of the programme's value. (see **Appendix 1 – Research Methods**)

Quantitative findings show participants experience an average 19% increase in wellbeing, with statistically significant improvements across 14 of the 15 wellbeing measures assessed. The greatest gains are in sense of accomplishment, life satisfaction, optimism, social connection and happiness.

Participants also exceeded their own self-identified goals by an average of **110%**, demonstrating meaningful progress towards the outcomes that matter most to them.²

A particularly significant finding is the breadth of impact on people's wellbeing. PtW produced meaningful positive change across personal wellbeing, social wellbeing, and the Five Ways to Wellbeing with participants reporting greater confidence, purpose, belonging, optimism and life satisfaction, along with stronger social connections, increased creative confidence and improved resilience.

An analysis of the qualitative data from reflective feedback sessions reveals the depth of these changes. Participants consistently describe Pathways as a safe, welcoming and creative community where they feel accepted, valued and able to express themselves. Many speak of renewed confidence, stronger identities, lasting friendships and a restored sense of purpose. For some, participation marks a turning point in their recovery and wellbeing.

Importantly, the benefits extend far beyond the sessions themselves. Participants describe returning to education, finding employment, volunteering, joining other community groups, sharing newly acquired skills with family and friends, and sustaining creative practice independently. Several participants moved from recipients of support to active contributors to their communities. Referrers observe increased confidence, reduced isolation and greater independence, recognising Pathways as an important stepping stone towards longer-term wellbeing.

The evaluation demonstrates that these outcomes are not accidental. Over the past decade, Pathways has developed into a mature, professionally delivered creative health programme, underpinned by clear governance, safeguarding and referral processes, reflective practice, ongoing workforce development,

and strong partnerships across the health, community and cultural sectors. The evaluation suggests these foundations are central to both the programme's impact and its sustainability.

Overall, the findings show that Pathways to Wellbeing is far more than an arts programme.

It is a model of creative health that enables people not only to improve their wellbeing, but to reconnect with themselves, with others and with their communities. Its impact extends beyond individual participants, strengthening relationships, building community capacity and demonstrating the vital role museums can play in supporting health, belonging and social inclusion.

**Dr Faye Sayer and
Amy Luck (Research Fellow)
University of Birmingham**

To see the full evaluation report please visit:
www.holburne.org/home/creativity-health-wellbeing/pathways-to-wellbeing/

². A percent of change can exceed 100% when the new number is more than double the original number. For example, an original value of 50 and a new value of 150 results in a percent change of 200%.

Pathways in Practice: What we delivered

Between April 2023 – 26 Pathways to Wellbeing delivered a rolling programme of supported creative activity, drawing inspiration from museum collections, temporary exhibitions and heritage sites and working with professional artists across a wide range of disciplines.

33

Peer-led monthly sessions

2

8-week Mentored
Volunteering courses

433

Individual sessions
(including mentoring sessions)

7

Exhibitions of PtW participant
and young people's artwork
in museums and community
settings, including The Shape
of Care: Making Care Visible
(2026)

37

Creative 7-week projects
for adults

(Led by artists with specialisms
in ceramics, printmaking,
painting, sculpture, natural
dyeing, textiles)

13

Creative 6-week projects
for young people

(Led by artists with specialisms
in photography, willow sculpture
work, fashion, screen printing)

14

Free Creativity & Wellbeing
public events and coffee
mornings (including World
Mental Health Day, Mental
Health Awareness Week)

Image credit:
World Mental Health Day,
Pathways at Bath City Farm, 2024

Who delivered Pathways?

19 Socially engaged creative
health practitioners

56 Museum volunteers

5 Staff from Partner Museums
& Organisations

The Holburne invested in 3 members
of staff over this period:

- PtW Programme Manager
(1.5 days per wk part-time)
- PtW Assistant Manager
(4 days per wk)
- PtW Tech & Admin Assistant
(2 days from Feb 2026)

Other Holburne staff who supported
the groups through sharing knowledge,
providing access, technical and admin
support

Museum Director

Visitor Experience Manager

Curators

Learning Assistant

Where?

Bath Museum Partners:
Holburne Museum
American Museum & Gardens
Bath Abbey

Health Partners:
Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health
Partnership NHS Trust

Other partners:
Fringe Arts Bath
Bath City Farm
Youth Connect South West

We also worked with:
Bath Assembly Rooms,
National Trust and Somer Shop

Funding

Since 2021 The programme has
been funded by private donors
and benefactors with additional
funding from the Baring Foundation
(Young Men's Programme)
and Museums Association/Julia
Rausing Trust from Jan 2026.



Pathways in Practice: Reach and Scope

159

Adults attended Pathways to Wellbeing groups for 23 weeks or longer* retention rate approx. 95%

34

Young people* (16 – 25) participated in our supported groups (**not in employment, education or training or struggling with mental health issues or socially isolated*)

Important: Wellbeing statistics reported do not include data from our young people's groups as they did not take part in the University of Birmingham's evaluation. Outcome and monitoring data are reported separately for these groups.

49

Mean age of adult participants

88%

identifying as female

70%

identifying as disabled

81%

are White British

75%

are not in paid work

86%

have an annual income under £20,000

Compared with Census 2021 data for the local area surrounding the Holburne, participants were on average:

- older
- predominantly female
- more likely to identify as disabled,
- more likely to be out of paid employment

Ethnic composition was broadly similar, although the proportion of participants identifying as White British was slightly lower than local estimates.

Fig. 3 Geographical catchment area of Pathways participants and young people (from available full postcode data)

Evaluation Findings – the difference the project made Social & Personal Wellbeing

Quantitative findings demonstrate improved wellbeing: participants experienced a **19%** increase in mean average wellbeing scores after attending Pathways to Wellbeing, with highly statistically significant improvements across 14 of the 15 wellbeing measures assessed. Improvement was recorded across all seven wellbeing indicators.

The programme improved participant wellbeing in:

Social wellbeing:

- Trust and belonging
- Supportive relationships

Personal Wellbeing:

- Emotional wellbeing
- Vitality
- Life satisfaction
- Self-esteem and resilience (self-esteem, resilience, optimism)
- Positive functioning (engagement, autonomy, competence and meaning and purpose)

There were increases in all measures except feeling physically active.

19% increase in subjective wellbeing*

*compared to 16% increase from comparable creative health programme in the South West of England.

The largest changes in participant scores after engagement included:

- A sense of accomplishment (+38%)
- Satisfied with my life (+28%)
- Optimistic about my future (+25%)
- Connected to people around me (+23%)
- Happy with my life (23%),
- Connected to the local environment (21%).



Figure 4: Participant mean average scores before, during and after engagement in Pathways to Wellbeing.

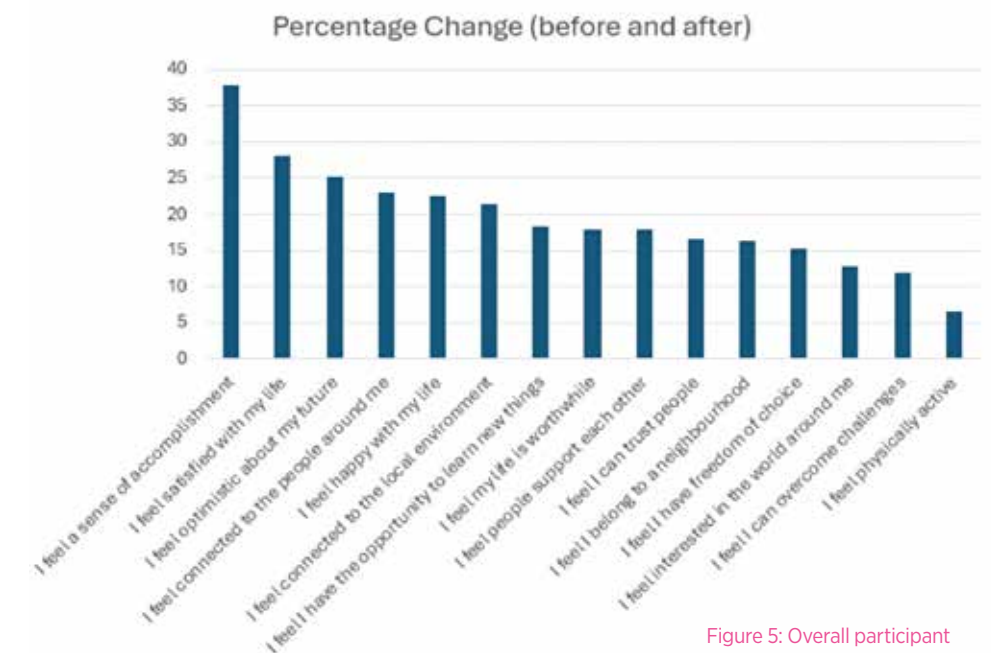


Figure 5: Overall participant mean average % change to MWS after engagement in Pathways to Wellbeing.

Self-identified Aims

Participants also completed a **Self-Identified Aims Wheel** (developed by Well-City Salisbury), identifying three personal goals they hoped to work towards through taking part in the group. These were recorded at the beginning of each project and revisited at the end, enabling people to reflect on their own progress and what had changed for them. For participants who found it difficult to identify goals, a list of 30 suggested aims were provided.

In total, 88 matched participants selected 262 aims.

On average, participants' progress towards their aims increased by two points on the 1–5 scale, moving from 2 ("making positive steps") at the start of the project to 4 ("almost there") by the end. This indicates that participants felt they made substantial progress and were close to achieving their goals

Participants progressed their self-identified aims by an average of 110% across the evaluation period. These are substantial figures, and the statistical significance of results (p-values of 0.001 across most measures) gives strong confidence that this change reflects genuine programme impact rather than chance variation.

The most frequently selected aims were:

Growing my creativity
Connecting with others
Finding community
Increasing wellbeing

The frequency of these selected aims demonstrated a desire amongst participants to connect and keep learning and improve personal wellbeing via positive functioning through engagement with development and progression and emotional wellbeing through increasing positive feelings. There was a clear desire for improved social wellbeing, specifically creating and maintaining supportive relationships and trust and belonging.

The Self-Identified Aims Wheel also gave participants space to articulate uniquely personal aims beyond the suggested list, and many did so in ways that revealed the specificity and depth of their individual motivations. Aims ranged from the practical, "*improving the use of my fine motor skills*" and "*being with likeminded creative people*", to the reflective and personal "*don't be perfectionist*", "*being kind to myself*" and "*to clear my brain fog*". Others spoke to a desire for immersion and commitment: "*immerse myself in the Holburne experience*" and "*commitment to doing this course*".

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing, developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), provides an evidence-based framework for understanding the everyday actions that can support personal wellbeing. The framework was used within this evaluation to explore how participation in Pathways to Wellbeing supported wellbeing in practice.

Thematic analysis of qualitative data from verbal feedback sessions, surveys and online interviews found evidence of all five Ways within participants' experiences. Pathways created opportunities to

1. Connect with others
2. Be active through making and engaging with cultural spaces
3. Take notice of their surroundings and experiences
4. Keep learning through developing creative skills
5. Give back through sharing skills, encouragement and support within the group.

Image credit:
Pathways to Wellbeing groups and
Creativity & Wellbeing events, 2024-6



Five Ways to Wellbeing	Qualitative data from verbal feedback sessions, surveys and online interviews with adult participants
Connecting with others	Reported as a consistent outcome, with participants describing how PtW helped them “<i>make new friends</i>” and “<i>feel part of something</i>”. For many, this connection addressed a deeper need – one participant reflected that the group “<i>fulfilled a deep need... for a sense of belonging</i>” while others described feeling “<i>part of a community</i>” and “<i>proud of being part of the Holburne community</i>” The supportive peer environment was particularly valued by those who had felt isolated before joining, with participants noting it was “<i>lovely to feel very accepted</i>” and that “<i>being around a group of kind and supportive people has given me more trust in others</i>”. Connection extended beyond the group itself to the Holburne Museum, described as a place of enduring safety: “<i>being part of the museum provides a sense of safety – even if the group ended forever, the Holburne feels like a safe place</i>”
Being active	PtW was reported as consistently providing motivation to engage physically with the world, getting participants “<i>out of the house</i>” giving them “<i>a reason to leave the house</i>” and helping them “<i>get back in the world</i>” and “<i>go to different groups</i>”
Taking notice	Participants describing a heightened awareness of sensations, feelings, and the environment. Creative activity supported mindful attention, from “<i>feeling the texture of clay... stopped me feeling anxious</i>” to noticing “<i>a quiet atmosphere</i>” and experiencing “<i>uplifted calmness</i>” whilst also encouraging self-awareness through trying “<i>different media so you can find out what your strengths and weaknesses</i>” are.
Keep learning	Participants describing developing “<i>lots of new skills</i>” and trying “<i>new things</i>” through a variety of creative activities, from “<i>new skills in creativity</i>” and “<i>development of artistic techniques</i>” to specific techniques such as “<i>sculpture in wax and wire</i>”, supported by “<i>inspiring</i>” tutorials and a programme that encouraged exploration of different media.
Giving	Participants describing the mutual support within groups, noting that it had “<i>been great to feel I can help people and they can help me</i>”, reflecting a culture of reciprocity and care that ran through PtW. Longer-standing participants also expressed a desire to give back, reflecting their growing sense of connection and belonging: “<i>I would like to give something back to The Holburne... They walked alongside me when things were difficult and it is now a place of safety in Bath.</i>”

Evaluation Findings – the difference the project made Participant Reflections

Social wellbeing

Social connection was one of the most sustained areas of impact. Many participants had experienced significant isolation before joining the programme. The welcoming atmosphere gave them opportunities to make friends, socialise without pressure and meet people with similar experiences and “*meet others who also have mental health problems who understand how I feel*”. Participants described feeling “*part of something*”, “*part of a community*” and that the group fulfilled a “*deep need... for a sense of belonging*”.

These relationships extended beyond participants themselves. Staff and artists were praised for their empathy, patience and encouragement, while the programme fostered a sense of mutual support and reciprocity. As one participant put it, it was “*great to feel I can help people and they can help me*”.

A deep sense of trust and belonging developed among Pathways to Wellbeing participants: they described feeling “*part of a group, all heading in a similar direction*”, “*proud of being part of the Holburne community*”.

The Holburne itself became a place of safety and connection, with one participant sharing that “*being part of the museum provides a sense of safety – even if the group ended forever, the Holburne feels like a safe place*”. Participants consistently described feeling “*always accepted*” “*always heard and listened to*” and treated with respect and care. Pathways to Wellbeing’s responsiveness to individual needs, from mobility adaptations to hearing accommodations, reinforced participants’ sense of being valued and included, with them sharing “*everything that could be done was done*” to support their participation.

Participants also shared their experiences with family members, including bringing relatives to the museum who had never previously visited an art museum. This suggests that the programme’s impact extended beyond individual participants into their families and wider networks.

Personal Wellbeing

“A safe healing creative space”

Across all three years and across the different methods of data collection, participants consistently describe Pathways to Wellbeing as a deeply meaningful experience. They describe it as “*truly invaluable*” and an “*amazing*” programme, a “*safe healing creative space*” that has “*changed my life*” and “*made life worth living again*”. These were not isolated responses: the consistency of the feedback demonstrates that Pathways offers much more than an enjoyable creative activity. It provides a supportive environment in which participants can build confidence, connection and a renewed sense of purpose. This is reflected in the evaluation data, which demonstrates meaningful positive change across all components of the National Accounts of Wellbeing framework.

Emotional wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing improved consistently, with participants reporting reduced anxiety, increased happiness, and a greater ability to process difficult emotions through the creative process.

Improved emotional wellbeing was one of the strongest and most consistent themes. Participants described feeling “*happier*”, “*more positive*”, “*relaxed*” and “*a lot less anxious*” after attending sessions. Creative activity gave them opportunities to process emotions, clear negative thoughts and explore difficult feelings in a safe environment. The calm and welcoming atmosphere was particularly important, with

Evaluation Findings – the difference the project made

Participant Reflections

participants describing an “*uplifting calmness*” and explaining that the programme could “*lift me when I felt low*”.

The creative process also encouraged participants to slow down, concentrate and pay attention to their surroundings and their own responses. Activities such as working with clay helped some participants manage anxiety, while experimenting with different materials encouraged them to discover their own strengths and preferences.

Life satisfaction

“The start of me building a new life in which I feel safe to explore and grow.”

Life satisfaction shifted significantly, with participants describing transformative changes in how they understood and experienced their own lives.

Many spoke of transformative change: the programme changed my life, helped me change my life, made my life worth living again, makes me feel like life is worth living, has changed my perspective about the trajectory of my life in climbing out of the darkness and life has colour, value and meaning again.’

Vitality

Vitality was supported through the regular groups providing structure, motivation, and a reason to leave the house and engage with the world, an impact that for some participants was foundational to wider recovery.

For many participants, simply having a regular reason to attend was an important outcome. Pathways provided “*a structure to the week*”, “*a reason to leave the house*” and helped people “*get back in the world*”. Some described feeling more energised and motivated to get out, while others went on to attend additional groups and activities in their communities.

Participants described how attending “*energised*” them and gave them “*that drive on weeks that I am struggling to get out of the house*” with one noting they were “*even getting up earlier than usual*”. The programme’s role in supporting physical activity and getting participants out of the house and into the community was a consistent theme, with several describing how it inspired them to “*go to different groups*” and “*join in with things outside my home*”.

Resilience, self-esteem and optimism

The programme also had a significant impact on confidence and self-esteem. Resilience and self-esteem were strengthened through the non-judgmental environment, the experience of creative accomplishment, and a meaningful shift in identity: from a person with mental health needs to a creative person with skills and something to offer.

Participants spoke about learning to “*believe in myself*”, becoming “*more confident*” and thinking more positively about themselves. The non-judgmental environment gave people the confidence to step outside their comfort zones, try unfamiliar things and take creative risks and explore “*without thinking I will be judged negatively*”. Over time, this helped build resilience and the ability to cope better with life’s difficulties.

Pathways to Wellbeing likewise supported optimism: participants described it as “*inspiring*” “*something I looked forward to*” which “*made me feel I should keep going*”. This source of optimism and renewed confidence, self-esteem and resilience translated into tangible next steps: joining other community groups, “*embarking on further Art study*”, and “*finding a job*” These longer-term ripple effects represent a particularly significant outcome.

Participants particularly valued the balance between support and independence. They appreciated having enough structure to feel

supported while also being able to make their own creative choices. Projects were described as “*open-ended and individual*”, with participants valuing the opportunity to “*go in our own direction*”. This sense of choice helped people work at their own pace and explore different media and approaches in ways that felt comfortable for them.

The programme’s progression ‘pathways’ and transition between groups was a source of anxiety for some participants, but reflections suggested that navigating this challenge was a significant source of growth. One participant reflected: “*moving on to the IMAGE group was scary, because I knew there wasn’t going to be the same support in place. But all of a sudden you grow and find yourself standing on your own two feet... I’ve grown so much in confidence, this group has been life changing for me*”.

The programme’s graduated structure, while daunting at first, appeared to play an important role in building genuine self-esteem, resilience and competence.

There were some tensions around creative freedom. While participants generally valued being able to explore their own ideas, some found particular materials difficult to control or found thematic briefs overwhelming. A few felt that clearer explanations and expectations at the beginning of projects would have helped them feel more confident about what they were being asked to do.

Positive functioning

Engagement, autonomy, competence and meaning and purpose

“I have been given the opportunity to use art to find my real self, also the freedom of choice and expression that I had not experienced before”.

For some participants, growth was connected to a renewed sense of purpose and optimism. Pathways became something to look forward to and a reason to keep going, with participants describing how it had changed their perspective on the direction of their lives. One described it as the beginning of “*building a new life in which I feel safe to explore and grow*”, while others went on to join other community groups, undertake further art study or find employment.

Participants frequently noted strong engagement, variously described as “*very engaging*”, “*flow*” “*losing myself*” and being “*in the moment*” with “*great focus*”. Feelings of competence were also consistent, with participants regularly sharing they “*leave with a sense of accomplishment*” and “*achieving results*”.

The opportunity to gain specialist skills was highlighted as a key motivation for engagement and positive outcomes. Participants valued working with equipment and techniques which were not available elsewhere, “*using the press and kiln felt very special*” and appreciated mastering more technical mediums such as clay, wax, silk painting and jewellery-making. The impact of this extended beyond sessions, with some participants sharing newly acquired skills with others, and others began selling their finished pieces, demonstrating how learning within Pathways to Wellbeing rippled out into wider community connection and contribution.

Autonomy was supported through inclusive practices which enabled participants to engage in ways that felt comfortable “good to have an opportunity to do things in a way that feels comfortable for me”, and through the freedom to “explore different media” and “try different things”.

Participants consistently appreciated the balance between structure and creative freedom, valuing projects that felt “open-ended and individual” and approaches that were “laid back” with space to “go in our own direction”. One participant explained “I liked the choice that was given, within the structure. I felt supported but also a sense of freedom to take things in my own direction too” while another appreciated the “general vibe of togetherness and freedom of expression”.

Tensions arose, however, when programme or material constraints felt limiting, whether due to a medium that was “hard to control” or a thematic

brief that felt overwhelming. Some participants also noted that clearer expectations at the outset of projects would have helped, with one reflecting that it would have been helpful “to frame the project a bit more clearly, to manage expectations”.

Across all years, participants described a renewed sense of **meaning and purpose**: “I feel I have purpose again” and “given me some kind of purpose” were sentiments which recurred consistently. For some, the impact was profound: one participant described how the programme “has changed my perspective about the trajectory of my life in climbing out of the darkness and life has colour, value and meaning again” whilst another reflected that what they did felt “valuable, worthwhile and valued by others” suggesting the programme played an important role in helping participants feel that their contributions mattered.



Pathways for Young People

Learning and Feedback

Alongside the Pathways programme for adults, the Holburne adapted the PtW model to work with young people (16-25) who were not in education, employment or training. Two regular groups offered free opportunities for those looking to support their wellbeing through creativity and cultural engagement. The same core Pathways approach was used: sustained engagement with professional artists, high-quality materials and creative processes, consistent relational support, and the opportunity to develop skills and confidence over time. Built into both groups was a requirement to ‘give back’ by sharing skills with others through planning and helping to facilitate creative public engagement events.

One group, funded by the Baring Foundation, specifically focused on increasing creative engagement amongst young men, offering a dedicated male-only space for anyone who identified as male. This approach was informed by the Foundation’s research into men’s participation in arts and mental health activities.⁴

The young people’s groups were not included within the University of Birmingham’s formal three-year evaluation. To understand participants’ experiences and inform the development of this work, the Holburne gathered its own qualitative evidence through verbal feedback and creative evaluation activities with the young people, lead artists and programme staff. (see **Appendix 3** for data collection methods)

While this evidence sits outside the formal evaluation, the themes that emerged closely reflect its wider findings. In particular, they reinforce the importance of creativity, trusted relationships, a sense of belonging, agency and sustained participation in supporting wellbeing.

Feedback from the young people’s groups suggests that the strength of the model lies in combining high-quality, creatively ambitious experiences with consistent, person-centred

support. Trusting relationships with artists and youth workers were highlighted as important for sustained, non-judgemental relationships to form with art providing a less pressured context for those relationships.

Several interconnected themes emerged:

Safety, belonging and acceptance are the foundation for engagement. Young people valued a consistent, non-judgmental space where they could participate in different ways and “simply be”. One described the group as teaching them “a sense of belonging and a safe space.”

Creative activity supports wellbeing and reduces isolation. Regular sessions provided routine, purpose, enjoyment and a reason to connect with others. For some experiencing significant isolation, the group became an important bridge back into social life, education and the wider community.

Relationships are as important as the making. Friendships, mutual support and being alongside peers were central outcomes. Young people described “coming out of my shell”, meeting people, teamwork and solidarity. Creative and social outcomes reinforced one another.

Flexibility enables inclusion. Young people had very different sensory, communication, concentration and decision-making needs. Choice, patient one-to-one support, alternative ways of working and freedom from judgement enabled them to engage on their own terms.

Young people developed confidence through doing, not simply through praise. Completing ambitious work, solving problems and trying unfamiliar techniques created genuine pride and resilience: “I did stuff I thought I couldn’t do.”

⁴ David Cutler and Harriet Lowe, *Creatively Minded Men: Exploring men’s participation in arts and mental health activities*, Baring Foundation, 2024.

Evaluation Findings – the difference the project made Social & Personal Wellbeing

Image credit:
Young People's groups,
'Make It New 'and
'Creative Minds', 2025-6

Learning extended well beyond art skills.

Alongside new creative techniques, young people developed planning, teamwork, problem-solving, communication, resilience, active listening, presenting, facilitation and organisational skills.

Sustained participation created progression and aspiration.

Over time, some young people moved from needing considerable support to collaborating, exhibiting, volunteering, sharing skills and planning or facilitating workshops. Their ambitions expanded too – from continuing their creative practice to

Overall, the groups created a pathway from safety and belonging to confidence, skills, agency and aspiration. The creative and wellbeing impacts were closely intertwined: feeling safe enabled creative risk-taking; making and achieving built confidence; and growing confidence enabled stronger relationships, greater independence and participation beyond the group.

Specific learning from our young men's creative health group⁵

Art making enables:

- Expression without requiring disclosure
- Social connection without requiring performance
- Belonging without requiring conformity

Participating, not performing – being able to take part without pressure to talk, perform socially or be the centre of attention.

Alternative ways of being male – a male-only space where young men could be themselves without conforming to stereotypical masculinity or a culture of male banter.

Creativity as a bridge into relationships – practical, side-by-side making enabled trust, conversation and connection to develop indirectly.

Hands-on, practical creativity as an important engagement tool – making, constructing, printing and experimenting with different materials gave young men a concrete reason to attend and remain engaged.

Constructive routine and a reason to leave the house – breaking up the week, reducing boredom and having somewhere purposeful to go were particularly important.

Turning up as an outcome in itself – increased attendance, punctuality, long-term commitment and responsibility represented significant progress for some young men.

Comfortable silence as a sign of belonging – learning that “*it's OK to be silent*” and being able to quietly make alongside others without social pressure.

Flow, calmness and creative escape – becoming absorbed in art offered respite, regulation and an opportunity to focus on the present.

From self-reliance towards interdependence – learning that they did not have to do everything alone and could collaborate, trust others, accept help and learn from one another.

Wellbeing expressed through practical rather than therapeutic language – young men often described benefits as “*something to do*”, “*breaking up my week*”, leaving the house, having fun, learning skills and finding things in common rather than explicitly talking about mental health.

Personal development through making – increased patience, tolerance, adaptability, timekeeping, responsibility, friendship and social confidence developed alongside creative skills.

Less emphasis on leadership, more on connection and participation – compared with the first group, progression was less focused on volunteering/facilitation and more strongly centred on belonging, attendance, relationships, practical competence and becoming comfortable participating with others.

⁵ See **Appendix 4** for a collective message from the young men about their experience of the group and the importance of creating more opportunities for young men.



Key Learning from adult groups

Accessibility and removing barriers

The fact that Pathways to Wellbeing was free was consistently valued. Several participants said they would not have been able to take part if there had been a charge. The free Pathways Admission Card (providing free entry to the Holburne and partner museums for participant + guest) was also used by participants, some of whom subsequently signed up for other creative activities. Removing financial barriers therefore appears to have supported wider engagement with culture and the museum.

Participants also highlighted practical barriers that can affect their ability to participate fully. These included parking, physical comfort during sessions, noise sensitivity, access to

materials for people with limited hand mobility, respiratory concerns relating to particular materials and childcare responsibilities. At the same time, participants valued the programme's responsiveness to individual needs, including mobility and hearing adaptations, and felt that staff did what they could to support participation.

These experiences underline the importance of continuing to consider accessibility throughout the programme, not only in relation to the physical environment but also the materials, activities, communication and practical circumstances that can affect participation.



Image credit:
Pathways participant
relaxing in new
Space to Be room,
Holburne Museum, 2026

Ripple Effect Impact Beyond the Programme

Cultural/ Creative Engagement

100%

of participants likely/very likely to attend similar activities in the future

94%

of participants likely/very likely to engage with cultural organisations in the future

759+

independent cultural visits made by participants using free Pathways Admission Cards – increasing engagement with local museums

9

people (we know of) who have gone on to further study, volunteering, or setting up their own ch groups

One of the most prominent impacts of Pathways to Wellbeing was the extent to which change rippled outward into participants' wider lives, networks, and communities, often in ways that extended far beyond what the programme could directly observe or measure.

Within the evaluation data, numerous examples speak to this transfer of energy and confidence into everyday life. Participants described finding employment after attending, embarking on further art study, and joining other community groups, steps which in many cases would have felt unimaginable before their involvement with Pathways. Participants shared recurring examples of how the programme's capacity to restore agency and momentum extended into the most ordinary corners of daily life: participants described getting up earlier than usual, leaving the house more readily, and actively seeking out new opportunities – a pattern of re-engagement with the world that recurred consistently across all three years.

Acquiring new skills

The skills and knowledge participants gained during sessions were actively shared beyond Pathways sessions. Some participants began selling pieces they had made, demonstrating how creative learning within Pathways generated not only personal satisfaction but tangible economic and social contribution. Others shared newly acquired techniques with friends and family members and other community groups, and several brought family members to the Holburne to share connections they had formed with the collections: one described bringing a nephew who had never visited an art museum before and watching him become absorbed in everything he saw. Pathways to Wellbeing's reach, in this sense, extended into participants' family lives and social networks in ways that are difficult to quantify but clearly significant.

Volunteering

Volunteering emerged as a particularly meaningful ripple effect throughout the evaluation period. Several former participants went on to volunteer for the Holburne and partner organisations, motivated by a desire to give back to the communities and spaces that had supported them. One long-standing participant took on a group lead volunteer role and described her ongoing involvement as a lifeline. Another represented the programme by greeting a royal visitor and subsequently spoke publicly to 120 people at the symposium, a remarkable trajectory for someone who had joined Pathways seeking support with confidence. These examples speak to a transformation that goes far beyond

improved wellbeing scores: participants moved from being recipients of support to active contributors to their communities.

The Peer-Led creative sessions, self-run by former participants with space provided by the Holburne, represent another ripple effect. Rather than leaving the programme and losing the community and creative practice it had provided, participants sustained and self-organised their own continuation, demonstrating the degree to which Pathways had equipped them not only with skills and confidence but with the social infrastructure to maintain their own wellbeing independently.



Ripple Effects Referral Organisations

100%

of referrers would refer patients/clients in future

'A really meaty, relatively long-term programme that makes a real difference' (referrer feedback)

Knowledge of Pathways to Wellbeing

Referrers found out about Pathways to Wellbeing through a variety of routes, including local networks and professional roles in mental health support, promotional materials such as leaflets, and direct conversations with Pathways to Wellbeing staff at local events. In several cases, awareness had deepened organically over time, through positive patient/client feedback, proactive mapping of local provision, and long-standing working relationships with the Pathways to Wellbeing team.

The formal relationship with Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Partnership Trust represented the most substantive partnership development across the evaluation period, deepening from supervisory support to co-development of the programme's theoretical foundations.

Motivations for Referring

Referrers shared that they referred individuals experiencing a range of mental health needs, including social isolation and loneliness, low mood, anxiety, depression, and psychosis, as well as those who would benefit from increased routine and structure, and who were working towards greater confidence and engagement outside their homes. In all cases, referrers emphasised the importance of matching

individuals for whom Pathways was a good fit, including those with an existing interest in arts and creativity, the ability to travel independently to sessions, and a readiness to participate in a group setting.

Referrers chose to refer to Pathways to Wellbeing for several reasons:

- The strength of their working relationships with the Pathways team
- The quality of communication
- Trust built through positive outcomes observed in patients/clients over time
- The programme's unique offering within the local area.

Across the three years, referrers consistently described Pathways to Wellbeing as a trusted and valuable resource for people experiencing social isolation, anxiety, depression, low confidence and other mental health challenges.

All referrers surveyed felt the programme directly linked to public health requirements and all were very likely to refer again, citing its "excellent reputation", communication, ethos and track record. Pathways was increasingly understood as an important part of the pathway from NHS services into sustainable community-based support.

Referrers particularly valued the combination of a nurturing and supported environment, trained staff and artists, high-quality creative opportunities, sustained engagement and no cost to participants. In a local landscape where free provision was often described as under-resourced or short-term, Pathways was seen as distinctive: a "really meaty, relatively long-term programme that makes a real difference", giving people time to develop skills, relationships and confidence. The Holburne itself was considered an important part of this offer – a special, calm environment in which making alongside others could reduce the social and emotional demands of group participation.

Referrers saw clear changes in participants over time, including improved wellbeing and confidence, reduced isolation, stronger social connections and greater engagement with opportunities beyond Pathways. Individuals who had previously been socially isolated or housebound were observed becoming more active and connected. The programme was therefore valued not only for what happened within sessions, but as a progressive pathway towards greater independence, with one referrer describing the programme as providing “really valuable stepping stones” into wider community life.

The quality and public visibility of participants' creative work also contributed to these outcomes. Referrers highlighted the “standard of work that can be produced” and the significance of participants seeing their work exhibited at the Holburne. Overall, Pathways was seen as a well-resourced, sustained and increasingly embedded part of the local health and wellbeing landscape – summed up by one referrer: “I am very grateful that I have Pathways to Wellbeing to refer my patients to and wish there were similar projects everywhere.”



Ripple Effects Staff

‘Staff and artists felt seen, heard, and that their wellbeing was actively considered alongside that of participants. Working on Pathways to Wellbeing was consistently described as a positive and enriching experience’

89% of staff and artists surveyed were very satisfied with being part of Pathways to Wellbeing and 100% were very likely to support a social prescribing project in the future.

Evaluation data indicated that facilitating Pathways to Wellbeing improved the emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, resilience, positive functioning, and social wellbeing for those delivering it. This is a meaningful finding in its own right: Pathways to Wellbeing not only supports participants' wellbeing but also has a genuine positive impact on those involved in delivering it. For freelance artists in particular, the programme provided professional validation, community, and a sense of purpose that counteracted the isolation frequently associated with freelance practice.

Staff consistently reported that involvement with Pathways to Wellbeing had a positive, meaningful impact on their own mental health. This engaging work provided a strong and reliable sense of meaning and purpose through the direct experience of witnessing participants' recovery, growing confidence, and the development of community and belonging, which staff described as profoundly motivating, thereby supporting future activities and optimism. Improved emotional wellbeing was reported across all years, with staff describing the privilege of working alongside and forming supportive relationships with a diverse and kind group of participants and colleagues.

Self-esteem and competence were supported through professional recognition, including at the exhibition and symposium, a deepened understanding of how to articulate the programme's value to different audiences, and learning new and developing existing artistic and clinical skills.

Community of Practice

Established in year two and developed further in year three, the Community of Practice (CoP) became a significant strength of the programme, providing freelance artists with space for reflection, professional development, shared learning and mutual support. It helped reduce professional isolation while enabling artists to shape the programme and develop shared values and approaches to care. This commitment to equitable practice included paying artists for their time attending CoP meetings.

By year three, this shared practice culminated in a printed booklet articulating how artists embed care throughout their work, which was presented at the symposium. Artists also described a strong sense of professional validation, belonging and ownership: exhibiting their own work alongside participants in *The Shape of Care* Exhibition was particularly affirming, while their willingness to champion Pathways through their professional networks reflected genuine pride in the programme. Sharing the evaluation findings with the CoP further reinforced this, making the collective scale and impact of the work visible to those delivering it.

Ripple Effects Museum Partners

Pathways to Wellbeing supported partner organisations' strategic aims relating to wellbeing and community provision, and for some organisations provided expertise and confidence that had previously been absent, inspiring more ambitious wellbeing programming and supporting partner staff professional development.

Staff shared that museum settings were essential to Pathways to Wellbeing's impact: the perception of museums as a quiet, reflective, slow space, where a culture of care is embedded in the very act of looking after their collections, was understood as foundational to what makes Pathways to Wellbeing effective.

Museum partners benefited from involvement with Pathways to Wellbeing through reaching new audiences, developing their own confidence and capability around wellbeing programming, and opening up their spaces and collections to be used in new creative ways. Staff successfully worked to deepen the integration of Pathways to Wellbeing with the Holburne and partner institutions, ensuring that sessions engaged with the host museum collections that inspired the creative activity, publicly displaying participant work, and working more closely with curators. Pathway's tailoring of projects to the history, aesthetics, and collections of each partner venue was appreciated by partner staff, who found it particularly gratifying when participant artwork was visibly inspired by their spaces and collections, demonstrating these as active rather than static. Improved tracking of membership card use gave staff a clearer understanding of how frequently current and former participants engaged with some of the museums outside of group sessions

The development of a new partnership with Bath City Farm, a significant departure from Pathways' usual museum and heritage settings, was viewed as an opportunity to reach new demographics and deepen understanding of what different contexts bring to creative health work.

Staff reported the development of an effective shorthand between partner organisations that reduced administrative burden and shared the value of both informal and formal communication channels. Staff consistently reflected that the strength of partnerships tended to rest on the investment and support of specific individuals within partner organisations rather than on organisation-wide ownership. Where senior leadership had not consistently engaged with or championed the programme, this created challenges both operationally and for the wellbeing of partner staff delivering Pathways to Wellbeing activities at their sites. However, towards the end of the evaluation period, this was beginning to change as partner museums increasingly sought funding for community engagement and creative health.

Embedding Creative Health: Institutional Change and Sector Leadership

Over the life of Pathways to Wellbeing, creative health has become increasingly embedded within the Holburne rather than sitting as a discrete programme alongside core museum activity. The programme has built organisational confidence and ownership, contributed to lasting changes in the museum's spaces and practice, and enabled the Holburne to take an increasingly visible leadership role within the creative health sector.

The **Shape of Care** exhibition was a significant expression of this shift, bringing together artwork created by participants, lead artists, volunteers and staff into the museum's public exhibition programme. As the third exhibition of Pathways artwork in ten years, this helps to embed creativity and wellbeing into the fabric of the Holburne's identity. Visitor responses demonstrated personal resonance and prompted conversations about care, mental health and the role of creativity in processing difficult experiences. Staff saw the exhibition as a moment of collective pride and part of a longer trajectory through which creativity and wellbeing have become embedded in the Holburne's identity.

A tangible institutional legacy is **Space to Be**, the quiet, reflective room created alongside the exhibition. Its value to visitors led the Holburne to retain it as a permanent mindful space, embedding wellbeing within the ongoing visitor experience rather than limiting it to the lifetime of the programme.

The **Care-ful Museums Symposium**, attended by 115 people from across the cultural, health and community sectors, extended this learning beyond the museum. It provided a platform for knowledge exchange and practical learning around sustained, care-centred approaches to creative health, positioning the Holburne and Pathways to Wellbeing as a source of sector leadership and innovation.

This legacy is also visible in participants' continuing relationships with the museum: people have progressed through the developmental programme into the self-led Happy Mondays group, maintaining engagement with the Holburne over two years, while at least nine participants are known to have progressed into further study, volunteering or developing creative health activity of their own.

What Makes Pathways to Wellbeing Work

A significant structural success across the evaluation period was the progressive professionalisation of Pathways to Wellbeing, putting increasingly robust infrastructure in place so that things feel “well held”. This encompassed the development of clear protocols and procedures, standardised templates and forms, and clearly articulated information materials for new artists setting out the programme’s values and expectations. Staff reflected that this clarity was visible and trusted by external partners and the wider community, contributing to the programme’s credibility and reach. Partner staff shared that they came to value and trust Pathways to Wellbeing’s structure, recognising that the stability it provides enables everyone involved to meet participants’ needs flexibly as they arise.

Across all data sources and all three years, several factors consistently emerged as central to Pathways to Wellbeing’s effectiveness:

The museum setting is foundational: the Holburne and its partner institutions provide a quiet, reflective, slow environment where a culture of care is embedded in the nature of the spaces themselves. It was felt that this environment regulates the nervous system, reduces the social demands of group interaction, and communicates to participants that they are valued and entitled to be there.

The quality of relationships: at every level, between participants, between participants and facilitators, between staff and artists, and between the Holburne team and its partners, is what makes the Pathways to Wellbeing’s outcomes possible. Pathways delivered wellbeing outcomes through the consistent experience of being genuinely seen, heard, supported, and valued.

The structure of consistent cohorts, clear start and end points, pre-programme meetings, graduated progression, and reflective endings creates the stability within which trust and growth become possible. Investment in getting the conditions right, including safeguarding, boundaries, artist briefing, and accessible design, ensures that the creative space functions as a genuinely safe and beneficial space.

The depth and duration of engagement sets Pathways to Wellbeing apart from most comparable provision. Referrers, participants, and sector peers all noted that sustained, long-term contact, rather than one-off or short-term interventions, is what enables change. This is both a strength and a vulnerability, as it requires sustained funding and organisational commitment to maintain.

Evaluation and reflective practice

A consistent evaluation and reflection framework became an important part of the Pathways to Wellbeing model, embedding participant feedback and staff learning throughout each project rather than only at its conclusion. Regular check-ins, facilitated reflective conversations with groups and annual evaluation enabled the team to understand participants’ experiences and continually adapt the programme. This learning strengthened particular aspects of delivery, including greater attention to **beginnings and endings:** meeting participants before projects began, carefully briefing artists to support new groups, and building reflection time into sessions so participants could recognise their own and the group’s achievements.

Recommendations

Participants

Participants’ feedback highlighted several practical ways the programme could be strengthened:

More time and greater frequency: Participants consistently wanted more time within sessions, particularly for technical or layered processes, as well as longer or more frequent opportunities to take part. More frequent sessions were felt to “*give a greater sense of momentum*”

Appropriate pacing and guidance: Clear technical demonstrations and a manageable pace were important in helping participants feel confident, engaged and able to get the most from activities.

Careful group management: Group size and interpersonal dynamics could affect participants’ experiences, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive environment and managing conflict sensitively

Accessibility and practical barriers: Parking, physical comfort, sensory needs and scheduling – particularly for parents – could influence people’s ability to participate fully and should be considered when planning activities.

Continuity and support beyond the programme: Participants valued the programme highly, but this could make coming to the end of it difficult. One participant described how “*following finishing the group - my mental health did deteriorate - to the point of needing input from the intensive mental health team...*”

This finding reflects both the depth of Pathways’ impact and a concerning lack of comparable support elsewhere. While transition to less-supported groups was an important source of growth for some participants (see p.19), Pathways should continue to resource transition support as an integral part of the programme, including alumni creative sessions, museum membership and onward signposting, alongside advocating for greater community provision.

Staff and artists

Staff and artists identified several priorities for sustaining the quality of Pathways and supporting its future development:

Protect quality as the programme develops: New partnerships, including Bath City Farm, and growing interest in creative health present opportunities to extend Pathways’ reach. Future development should be carefully paced, preserving the quality, relationships and distinctive approach that underpin the programme’s success rather than pursuing growth for its own sake.

Balance ambition with capacity: Capacity pressures were a recurring theme across all three years, particularly as the programme expanded alongside exhibitions, events and wider sector-development work. Future planning should ensure that organisational ambition is matched by appropriate staffing, time and resources, protecting staff wellbeing and the quality of delivery.

Create more time for deeper creative practice: Staff and artists consistently identified the value of longer sessions, occasional whole-day workshops or extended projects. As with participants, the emphasis was on creating greater depth and quality rather than simply increasing the volume of activity.

Continue to invest in safeguarding, boundaries and reflective practice: Training and strengthened safeguarding processes introduced during the evaluation have increased confidence across the team. Continued investment in training, clinical supervision and the Community of Practice will be important, particularly for artists and support workers delivering at partner venues and managing complex group dynamics or the emotional impact of endings.

Recommendations

Strengthen referral pathways: Clearer referral and eligibility criteria should continue to be developed with health and community partners, ensuring that participants' needs are appropriate to the level of support Pathways can safely provide and that referrers understand the programme's scope and boundaries.

For the Museum

The evaluation identifies several strategic priorities for the Holburne to sustain Pathways and maximise the value of its learning and impact:

Develop a sustainable funding model:

Long-term funding remains a significant concern for a programme now embedded within the local creative health and mental health support landscape. Diversifying income and securing longer-term investment would reduce reliance on individual donors and provide greater stability for participants, staff, artists and partners.

Ensure capacity keeps pace with ambition:

Pathways has grown significantly in scale, reach and complexity. Continued strategic investment in staffing and operational capacity is essential to sustain the quality of the programme, support staff wellbeing and enable future development.

Continue to invest in evaluation and learning:

The programme's sustained approach to evaluation is a significant asset. Three years of consistent quantitative and qualitative evidence provides a robust understanding of Pathways' impact and a strong foundation for future development, advocacy and funding. Evaluation expertise and tools were also identified by symposium attendees as an important need across the wider creative health sector, presenting an opportunity for the Holburne to share its learning and support others.

Strengthen external communications and advocacy:

Pathways is well understood and valued within the Holburne and among its partners, but its impact and learning could be communicated more confidently to wider audiences. Developing accessible ways to share the programme's stories and evidence – and embedding creative health more fully within the museum's communications – would raise awareness locally and nationally and strengthen the Holburne's voice within the museum and creative health sectors.

Build greater visibility through partnership:

Partners identified an opportunity for Pathways to become more outward-facing and better known beyond the Holburne. Building on existing relationships and networks could extend the reach of its learning, strengthen collaboration and help position Pathways as part of a wider creative health ecology rather than a programme operating in isolation.

Image credit:
Care-ful Museums book
created by Pathways Community
of Practice artists

Referrers

Increase visibility of Pathways sessions:

Provide referrers with more information about what sessions involve and the environment in which they take place.

Offer taster sessions for referrers: Give referrers the opportunity to attend taster sessions so they can better understand the experience and support provided.

Develop accessible pre-session resources:

Consider creating short video clips or other accessible content showing what sessions are like. These could be particularly useful in clinical settings, where people may find it difficult to imagine what participation involves.

Support conversations between appointments:

Make these resources available for referrers to share with people who may not yet be ready for a referral but might consider engaging with Pathways in the future.

Provide feedback to referrers: Develop ways to let referrers know whether the people they have referred have benefited from and progressed successfully within the programme. This would help them improve how they match individuals with appropriate activities over time.

Continue and expand Pathways to Wellbeing:

Referrers strongly supported the continuation and expansion of the programme and emphasised the importance of advocating for Pathways as a legitimate part of the pathway away from NHS services.

Strengthen links between clinical and community provision:

Recognise and communicate the role that community-based programmes such as Pathways can play in supporting people beyond clinical treatment and as part of the transition away from NHS services.



Appendix One

Evaluation Methodology

Data Collection

Evaluation for staff/artists and participant project attendees initially comprised completing a survey at the start and the end of each project attended. Data collection points were amended part-way through Year 1 to reduce survey fatigue amongst participants and were subsequently collected at the start, halfway through and at the end of involvement with Pathways to Wellbeing groups.

Participant surveys included qualitative questions, the Self-Identified Aims Wheel, free comment space and the Modified Wellbeing Scale (MWS), which asked participants to rank how much they felt statements linked to factors known to impact wellbeing (based on the National Accounts of Wellbeing Framework – Figure 1 and Five Ways to Wellbeing – Figure 2) applied to them at that time on a scale of 1 to 5. Staff and artist surveys comprised the MWS, qualitative questions, free comment space and staff reflections about the participant experience.

Figure 1: National Accounts of Wellbeing Framework indicator structure⁶

Figure 2: 5 Ways to Wellbeing⁷

Data Analysis

Participants were also invited to attend verbal feedback sessions, which comprised informal guided conversations led by Louise Campion and Sophie Williams-Brown, without the lead artist present, after the last session of each 6-week project for the Gardener's Lodge Art Group and Image. Key participant comments from these sessions were anonymised, transcribed and then shared with the evaluation team.

Key stakeholders, including project staff, partner staff and referrers, were invited to take part in short online interviews to share their perspectives on how the programme impacted participants, staff and artists, and any personal and professional impacts to themselves. During this interview staff were asked to critically reflect on what worked well and what did not and consider how any issues could be resolved and improved in the future.

Referrers were invited to complete a short online survey to capture their perspectives, this included the relationship of the programme to public health requirements, reasons for referring to Pathways to Wellbeing, perceptions of how the project had supported those they had referred, satisfaction levels and free comment space.

Volunteers monitoring the Shape of Care exhibition completed short surveys to capture their observations, including visitor numbers, engagement, reactions and conversations.

Participant and staff/artist before and after surveys were matched and if one data set was missing (e.g., a participant had not completed both the before and after survey) then the participant was excluded from the data set, as without this the change to the participant's wellbeing could not be assessed. If possible, where participants left the programme early, their 'mid-point' survey was used in place of the after survey.

Mean results from before, mid-point and after surveys were calculated to enable an understanding of the impact of the programme. Where possible (a minimum number of 25 matched surveys is required), statistical hypothesis testing was conducted on before and after wellbeing surveys to determine the significance of changes to wellbeing after engagement with Pathways to Wellbeing, and the probability that any change was not a result of chance and showed a true reflection of the target population. The Paired-Sample Sign Test or Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test (related sample tests) were applied.

Mean results of self-identified aims from before and after surveys were determined and percentage change was calculated by examining the differences between the two numbers and calculating the percentage increase/decrease between them. This facilitated understanding of whether participants felt they had progressed their aims. Qualitative data from verbal feedback sessions, surveys and online interviews was thematically analysed. Key themes identified were linked to the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and National Accounts Framework Wellbeing Indicators.

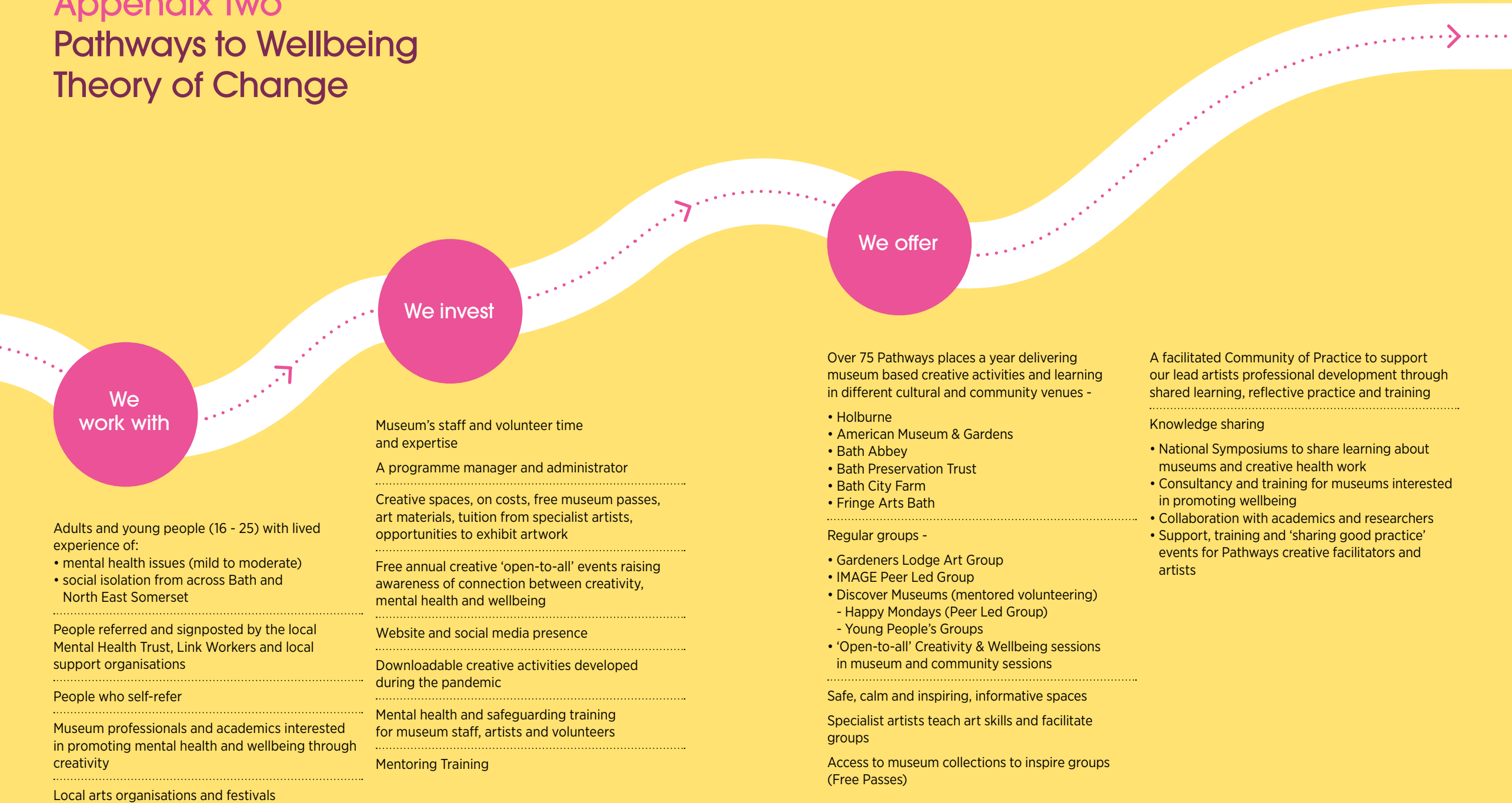
⁶ Michaelson, J., Abdallah, S., Steuer N., Thompson, S., and Marks, N. 2019.

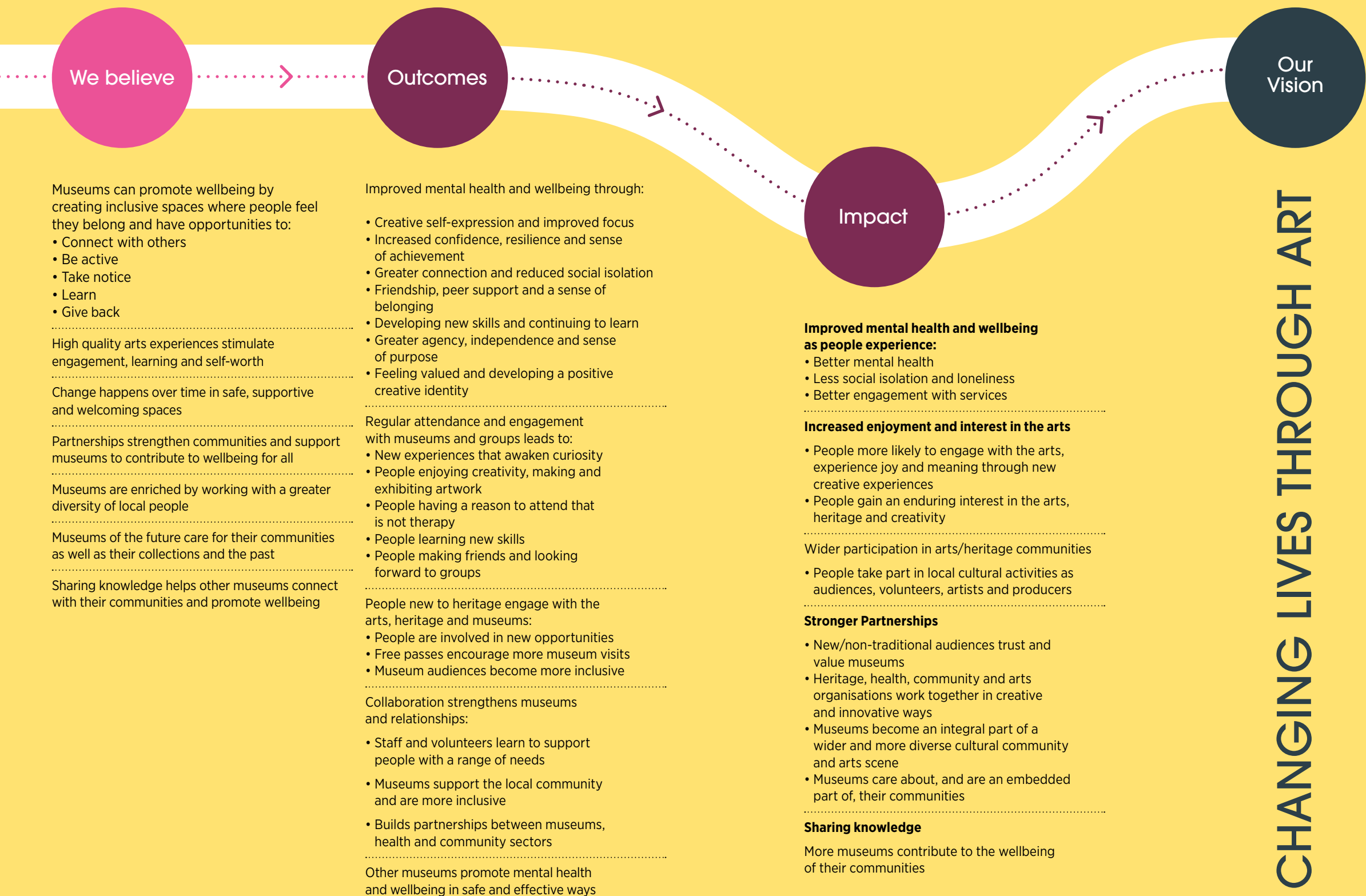
⁷ WellbeingInfo.org, '5 Ways to Wellbeing', <https://wellbeinginfo.org/self-help/wellbeing/5-ways-to-wellbeing> [Accessed 19/04/2023]

Appendix Two

Pathways to Wellbeing

Theory of Change





Appendix Three: Evaluation Methodology: Young People's Groups

Data for the young people's groups was collected using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative measures with written, verbal and creative reflection activities.

Participants in one group completed three short evaluation postcards (Wellbeing Goals, Creative Goals and Volunteering Goals) to capture and compare pre- and post-engagement scores. In-person reflective group conversations were also recorded at the end of specific projects or at natural breaks in the programme, providing opportunities for young people to reflect on their experiences, learning and outcomes.

Group leaders completed short reflection and feedback forms following each session, recording observations about engagement with the creative activities, group dynamics, young people's wellbeing and support needs. This learning was used to inform subsequent sessions.

For young people two creative evaluation methods were also used to support different ways of reflecting and communicating. In one activity, young people selected a small object from a collection and used its qualities or associations as a prompt to describe their experience of the group. Participants took turns to share their reflections whilst holding their chosen object.

A 3-D reflection tree was also used to explore participants' experiences and perceived outcomes. Young people added written reflections to different parts of the tree:

Roots represented the foundations of the group and what they needed in place to feel safe and able to explore their creativity.

Leaves and fruit represented what they had gained through participation, including wellbeing, relationships and skills.

Birds represented what had given them confidence or aspiration to take their learning and creativity beyond the group.

For our Young Men's Group, the artists, group leaders and support staff involved were invited to contribute to a facilitated verbal feedback session to capture their learning over a 2 year period (2024- 6).

Appendix Four: A collective message about the importance of creating more opportunities for young men

What we've learnt from making together

Young men need:

- **Places to belong.** Somewhere we can be accepted as we are, without having to fit in.
- **Ways to connect.** Making gives us a shared purpose. Friendships can grow naturally when you're working side by side.
- **Time.** Trust, confidence and relationships grow slowly. Like growing a tree – slowly, little by little, it becomes stronger.
- **Space to be male in different ways.** All-male spaces are rare outside sport. Creative spaces can offer a different way of being together – without expectations about what being a man should look like.
- **Creativity without pressure.** A chance to experiment, get things wrong, learn new skills and surprise yourself with what you can do. Participating, not performing.
- **Ways to connect without having to talk about everything.** Sometimes the making comes first. Conversation can happen alongside it. Sometimes being quietly absorbed together is enough.

- **People we can trust.** Relationships matter. Having adults who work alongside you, listen, share their skills and get to know you over time makes a difference.
- **New adventures.** Different artists, materials, skills and ideas give you reasons to keep turning up – and the confidence to have a go at something unfamiliar.
- **Space to switch off.** Getting into the flow of making can create a bubble from everything else – a chance to be in the here and now.
- **Other people.** We don't have to do everything ourselves. Making together lets us learn from each other, help each other and create things we might not be able to make alone.

Young men need creative spaces where they can make, connect, experiment and belong.
(Creative Minds, July 26)

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