

Junior Art & Soul project evaluation report

**Clinical and creative partnerships:
An art and wellbeing pilot project
working with children and young people
accessing Child and Adolescent Mental
Health Services (CAMHS)
in South West London**

October 2021

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*Thank you to everyone who participated in the evaluation
for taking the time to talk with us.*

***Junior Art & Soul was led by Art & Soul
and funded by The Baring Foundation.***

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CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND	5
Project Overview	6
The Evaluation Report	7
2. PROJECT OUTPUTS	9
Summary of Project Outputs	10
3. THE EVALUATION PROCESS	12
The Evaluation Framework and Methods	13
A Note on Data Collection Methods	14
4. FINDINGS	16
Summary of Key Findings	17
Children and Young Peoples' Experiences of Junior Art & Soul	18
Partners and Partnership-Working	22
Art & Soul and Covid 19	29
5. WHAT NEXT FOR JUNIOR ART & SOUL?	31
6. SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS	33
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY	36

1.

BACKGROUND

Project Overview

This report brings together evaluation data collected as part of the Junior Art & Soul project, which took place between October 2020 and July 2021. Funded by Baring Foundation, the project was led by arts, wellbeing and mental health charity Art & Soul working with a freelance project coordinator, two lead artist facilitators and two project assistants. Its principal aims were:

- to research and broker new sustainable partnerships with South West London-based organisations, and services focused on children and young peoples' mental health
- to develop and deliver a series of creative workshops for young people with the objective of enhancing their wellbeing

Additionally, the project sought to:

- strengthen Art & Soul's existing collaborative relationship with Springfield University Hospital
- develop expertise, new skills and capacity within the organisation's project team
- actively contribute to conversations across both creative and health sectors about the role of art in supporting the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people

The Junior Art & Soul project consisted of two main phases: a research and development phase and an intensive workshop-delivery phase. During the former, the project coordinator and artist facilitators researched and consulted with local organisations supporting young peoples' mental health. The latter centred around three five to six week-long programmes of workshops devised in partnership with Achieving for Children's Emotional Health Service, the South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust Adolescent Outreach Team (Springfield University Hospital), and the Priory Hospital School, part of Priory Hospital Roehampton. Over the lifespan of the project, a total of 31 children and young people aged 13-18 years participated. All were receiving treatment from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) at either Tier 2 or Tier 4 level.¹

¹ Tier 2 CAMHS has an early intervention approach for children and young people, who experience prolonged periods of emotional distress and present with difficulties that fall within the mild-moderate range of mental health disorders. It offers assessments and treatments with the aim of helping to improve a person's ability to function and cope with the difficulties that they have. Tier 4 is a specialised NHS service, often including residential care, directed towards patients with acute emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties.

Workshops took the form of guided explorations of diverse artistic processes, materials and techniques inspired by themes such as nature, transformation and self-care. One programme explicitly integrated art and therapeutic activities and complimented 'live sessions' with guided self-help support via email. Although initially it was envisaged that the majority of participants would create artworks for submission to Art & Soul's online autumn exhibition "Cycles of Nature", this objective was modified in response to workshops where attendance was more ad-hoc and to better accommodate the individual goals of children and young people.

Depending on the protocols of partner organisations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project made use of in-person, online and blended workshop delivery methods. In addition to sessions with young people, the project also delivered three introductory staff sessions (one per partnership), which were attended by art therapists and clinicians. These aimed to preview artistic techniques and activities used in workshops with young people through hands-on art-making and gave staff the opportunity to provide valuable feedback on workshop plans.

The Evaluation Report

This report is based on evaluative data collated throughout the duration of Junior Art & Soul using a bespoke research methodology and range of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and tools. These are described in full in part 3 of this document. The project's main successes, as well as areas identified for improvement, are presented under **findings** in part 5 of this document and have been arranged according to the experiences of the three main stakeholder groups (children and young people, partner organisations and Art & Soul). Special mention is also made of the impacts of Covid-19 on the project. Towards the end of the report, **selected learnings and recommendations** are also provided in the hope that they might help to a) shape Art & Soul's ongoing creative and wellbeing work with young people in future and b) support the charity to further position itself as a responsive and responsible partner for South West London-based NHS services, voluntary sector organisations and council teams focused on children and young people's mental health. This report is guided by the following questions:

1. What impact did the Junior Art & Soul project have on young participants, partner organisations and staff from Art & Soul?

2. To what degree did the project enhance the wellbeing of participating children and young people?

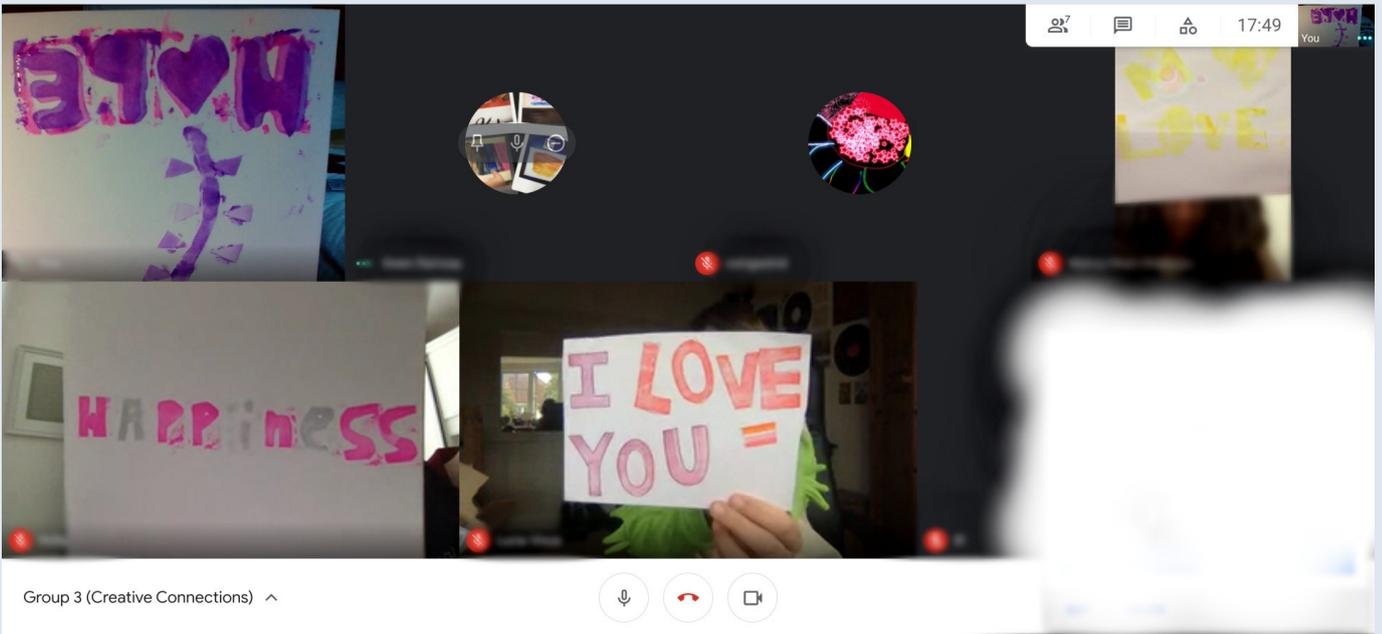
3. What lessons have been learnt about working in partnership with South West London-based organisations and services focused on children and young peoples' mental health?

2.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

Summary of Project Outputs

- In-depth research carried out by the Junior Art & Soul project team into CAMHS and other types of mental health / arts and mental health provision for children and young people in South West London
- Creation of **2 new creative-clinical partnerships** with CAMHS (Tier 4) in South West London
- Existing relationship with South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust Adolescent Outreach Team (Springfield University Hospital) strengthened
- Development and delivery of **16 art and wellbeing workshops** using a combination of in-person, online and blended workshop delivery methods working with a total of **31 children and young people** from South West London facing borderline clinical to acute mental health challenges
- Opportunities for celebratory displays of artwork provided at the end of each workshop and as part an upcoming exhibition entitled Cycles of Nature
- Development and delivery of **3 introductory staff sessions** for partner organisations with **a total of 30 attendees** including art therapists and clinicians
- Success in securing project extension funding from One Richmond used to deliver **2 additional workshops per partnership** over summer 2021 including one in-person family-orientated session held at Kew Gardens
- Conversations in process with all three project partners to discuss future collaborative projects including possible artist-in-residency programme for one in-patient facility and workshops with young people with less severe mental ill-health who have issues attending school



Participants from the Achieving for Children project show their homemade stamps during an online workshop.

3.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The Evaluation Framework and Methods

“We’re growing and learning and [...] we have to acknowledge that sometimes you only learn by making mistakes.”

- Artist facilitator, Art & Soul

The evaluation framework for Junior Art & Soul was developed by the external evaluator in collaboration with Art & Soul. It was designed to assess the degree to which the project achieved its aims and evidence impacts on participants (children and young people), partners and the Art & Soul team. The project coordinator and charity’s trustees were also keen to consolidate existing organisational knowledge and increase confidence in using a range of evaluation tools as well as explore new methods for gathering feedback. As a result, it was decided that artist facilitators would be supported by the external evaluator to experiment with several approaches to data collection in workshops. These included: *UCL wellbeing measure questionnaires, ethnographic observation and reflection record sheets* and *participatory activities* such as ‘Head, Heart, Bag, Bin’.² Artists, assistants, art therapists and support staff also used a number of informal check-in and check-out activities based around conversation prompts such as the following: *What gives you comfort during lockdown?, What music are you listening to right now?, What did you like about today’s session?, What was hard? What will you carry on with?* In the case of the project with Achieving for Children, the partner organisation largely took responsibility for evaluation and used cyp-iapt informed³ routine outcome measures (ROMS) to track participants’ experiences over the duration of the project. Five staff members and a trustee and co-chair of Art & Soul also took part in *1-2-1 reflection interviews* while some of the same staff members and three representatives from partner organisations participated in two rounds of ‘*Cards on the Table*’; a creative tool and game designed to evaluate artistic collaborations and support everyone to collectively listen and

² *Ethnographic observation and reflection record sheets* were filled in at the end of each session as part of workshop de-briefs. Often completed in collaboration with project assistants and representatives from partner organisation, they aimed on the one hand, to register participant numbers and capture observations related to the behaviour of all those involved in workshops, and, on the other, reflect on what went well/what could be improved. *Head, heart, bag, bin* is a participatory evaluation activity aimed at gathering qualitative feedback from participants on a particular project, event or training. Overall, the activity was deemed difficult to facilitate along with the wellbeing questionnaires were considered difficult to implement. For more information see p.14 of this document.

³ ‘Cyp-iapt’ refers to Children and Young People’s Improving Access to Psychological Therapies while routine outcome measures indicate whether a young person is showing clinical levels of mental health challenges.

learn from one another.⁴ Art & Soul's organisational learning was furthered captured and shared via a series of blog posts written by one of the Junior Art & Soul project assistants.⁵

A Note on Data Collection Methods

It is important to acknowledge that in the documentation of feedback from children and young people participating in the Junior Art & Soul project some data collection methods used were more successful than others. Ethnographic observation and reflection record sheets as well as partner initiated ROMS provided particularly useful insight into the way in which participants responded to workshops and the impact that these had on mood and behaviour. By contrast, wellbeing questionnaires as well as other less-structured reflection activities were often difficult to implement and did not always yield results that were statistically significant.⁶ This was due to a variety of factors:

- **Participants had a range of complex mental health needs, which severely affected their self-esteem and ability to express themselves.** Generally, they struggled with free-form evaluation activities such as Head, Heart, Bag, Bin, which asked them to come up with their own words to describe their experiences of workshops. In wellbeing questionnaires they were also largely reluctant to contribute feedback beyond multiple-choice answers.
- **Young peoples' participation in workshops fluctuated due to ill-health** and this inconsistency impacted on the relevance of data captured via questionnaires, which had originally been designed to track changes to participants' wellbeing over multiple workshops (as opposed to individual sessions).
- In the Priory Hospital School project, **participants sometimes had to leave workshops early to attend other timetabled therapeutic activities and therefore were not present for evaluation exercises**, which were generally carried out towards the end of sessions.

4 Cards on the Table was co-created by creative practitioners Ania Bas, Sophie Hope, Siân Hunter Dodsworth, Sophie Mallett and Henry Mulhall. It is a game that helps people think and talk critically about a specific project that they are all working on as a group allowing them to talk about doubts, fears and hopes in an open way and to become better collaborators as a result. For more information see: <https://www.cardsonthetable.org>

5 See here for blogposts including those reflecting on Junior Art & Soul: <https://www.artandsoul.org.uk/blog-1>

6 Only 19% of children and young people completed a wellbeing questionnaire at the beginning and end of the project. As a result, this data alone cannot be said to be representative of the majority of participants. It may be that in future Art & Soul decides to replace questionnaires with other data collection approaches or tries to implement them differently (for ex. at the beginning and end of each workshop), so as to capture information from all individuals including those who do not participate in an entire run of workshops.

- In blended workshops as part of the Adolescent Outreach Team (Springfield University Hospital) project, **young people attending online were reluctant to take part in evaluation exercises and did not complete virtual wellbeing questionnaires** despite being encouraged to do so.

Although challenging at the point of evaluation, these examples provide a crucial point of learning for the Art & Soul team as they demonstrate the importance of: 1) combining several types of data collection methods when carrying out project evaluation to ensure more robust results, and 2) testing out and reflecting on the efficacy of different evaluation tools when working with new audience groups and in varied workshop formats (online, in-person, drop-in etc.).

For specific recommendations and suggestions regarding evaluation with young people with mental ill-health, please see section 6 of this report.



Staff from Art & Soul and representatives from partner organisations discuss Junior Art & Soul as part of online game of Cards on the Table. Screenshot by Siân Hunter Dodsworth.

4.

FINDINGS

Summary of Key Findings

- Semi-structured art activities and engagement in art-making processes had a positive impact on children and young people, enabling them to feel less anxious, less isolated and better able to express themselves creatively.
- Young peoples' participation in the Junior Art & Soul project contributed to improvements in their mood and wellbeing.
- Junior Art & Soul provided many participants with an opportunity to socialise with their peers as well as adults from the project team. However, personal interactions were most effective in those projects where participants all occupied the same space at the same time (whether virtual or physical).
- In-depth conversations with mental health providers at the start of the project were worthwhile and resulted in the development of stronger partnerships.
- Each partnership was unique and provided the Art & Soul team with opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of different collaborative models when working in partnership with mental health organisations.
- Staff sessions provided much-needed feedback on workshop plans, enabled skills-sharing and helped to raise the profile of Art & Soul within partner organisations.
- The Junior Art & Soul project facilitated opportunities for staff from Art & Soul to develop new skills and knowledge when working with children and young people with severe mental ill-health.
- The Covid-19 pandemic presented the Junior Art & Soul project coordinator and lead artist facilitators with a series of logistical challenges at both the project's planning and delivery stage. However, on occasions, it also created opportunities.

Children and Young Peoples' Experiences of Junior Art & Soul

A. Participation in art-making had positive effects on children and young people

"I made an artwork I'm proud of." - Participant Springfield University Hospital

Artist facilitators were keen to offer young people the chance to play and experiment with a range of art materials and processes. These included: drawing, modeling, painting, marbling, printmaking and pompom-making, amongst others. Special efforts were made to guide participants through activities step by step as a way of helping them to develop technical skills although they were also strongly encouraged to make individual creative choices about aspects such as colour and design. One artist facilitator incorporated into workshop plans what she described as "a-ha! moments" (moments of surprise and transformation), as a way to maintain young peoples' engagement and enthusiasm throughout the duration of the project. As the project assistant observed, this approach seemed to be very effective with groups:

"The techniques we used were such that there would always be a 'reveal' moment, whether it was lifting up a stamp, removing the marbled paper from the water or pulling the pom-pom from its plastic casing... The best thing about these sessions has been seeing the young peoples' responses [to this], which would often be that of pleasant surprise at what they had made."

- Project assistant (blogpost, June 2021)

In their own comments, participants were overwhelmingly positive about the Junior Art & Soul project. When asked to talk about their favourite parts of the workshops, they were talked with particular enthusiasm about specific art-making activities they had enjoyed and reflected proudly on artworks they had made.

Selected Quotes:

"I am happy with my pompom."

"I really enjoyed printing and the stamps were so cool!"

"I liked creating a painting and drawing."

"Really nice themes and amazing colours."

"It's been great."

"I could do this forever!"

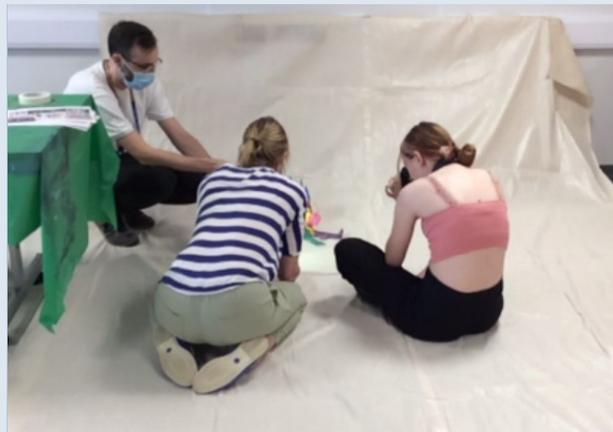
For support workers and art therapists from partner organisations, Art & Soul’s emphasis on a process-driven, rather than outcome-driven, approach to delivery was considered ideal for young people experiencing acute mental health crises. They were especially impressed by the way in which artist facilitators encouraged staff to get involved in art activities and even participated themselves in order to “model” particular attitudes or transferable skills such as problem-solving. Furthermore, they praised the project team for listening and responding to both the needs and interests of young people, and those of their colleagues and wider organisations. This feedback shows that Art & Soul was able to successfully meet and balance the requirements of the project’s various stakeholders:

“I love that you’re responding to what our children and young people need but also within our partnership, we’ve talked about what our service needs and what staff need.”

- Representative from Achieving for Children

“As soon as I met you, I realised that we’re all on the same page... The kids definitely had a good time... They especially enjoyed the process.”

- Representative from Priory Hospital School



Young people create sculptures and hanging mobiles in the Priory Hospital and Springfield University Hospital projects. Photos by Ursula Kelly and Gwen Ramsay.

B. Participation in the project lead to improvements in Young Peoples' wellbeing

Despite the aforementioned small sample sizes of the UCL wellbeing questionnaires, of those surveyed, **83% showed a 10% improvement in wellbeing**. In the partnership project with Achieving for Children, results were even more conclusive with **100% of participants being discharged from the service** following their engagement in workshops.⁷

In addition to participants' own feedback, therapists, clinicians and other support staff from partner organisations played an essential role in supporting the Art & Soul project team to recognise actions and behaviour that indicated improvements to young peoples' mood and wellbeing. This process included: 1) being provided with limited background information on individual participants, which helped to develop a baseline against which future measures and observations could be compared, and 2) modifying expectations of what "good participation" might look like for groups who were dealing with often severe mental health issues, including anorexia, anxiety, low mood and depression. As one representative from Springfield University Hospital explained: *"It is quite hard to have an outcome to work towards because of the fluid nature of attendance and the young people's mental states, like, how they're feeling that day or if they fancy coming in or not...That's just the reality of the service [we work in]"*. While at the Priory Hospital School, a more informal set-up meant that participants dropped in and out of sessions depending on other timetabled commitments, in a small number of cases at Springfield University Hospital, participants were not able to attend all of the workshops as they did not remain on case-load throughout the entirety of the project. Despite these challenges, **43% of participants attended more than one workshop** and overall **20% attended an entire course of workshops**. Those who chose to join sessions also invariably stayed for the duration and this ability to stick with workshops was recognised by the project team as another important measure of success.⁸

As the artist facilitators got to know groups better, other examples of the way in which young people positively engaged with workshops were observed. In particular, it was identified that many participants:

- Became increasingly confident in expressing themselves creatively

⁷ At the beginning of the project, 5 out of 6 (83%) participants showed 'borderline clinically significant' or 'reaching clinical threshold' levels of mental illness. By the end of the project all 6 participants were considered to no longer have levels of mental illness that were 'clinically significant'.

⁸ An estimated 80% of those who started workshops chose to stay until the end. According to support staff from Springfield University Hospital, the fact that several children and young people logged on to session (even if they weren't always participating in the art activities) was considered "a great victory" (Interview with project assistant).

- Demonstrated increased tenacity and patience, persisting at activities even when feeling frustrated or when art materials and processes “didn’t do exactly what they wanted them to” (interview artist facilitator)
- Became better over time at concentrating and often “found their flow” while participating in art-making
- Visibly relaxed in sessions and displayed less nervous behavioural tics
- Showed increased self-esteem and engaged less frequently in negative talk
- Demonstrated energy, excitement and delight as they mastered particular artistic techniques and learnt to transform their creative ideas into finished artworks

Finally, anecdotes documented by partner organisations and artist facilitators as part of workshop de-briefing sessions, were indicative of the myriad ways in which Junior Art & Soul affected small but significant changes in the everyday lives of young people struggling with mental illness:

1. One young person travelled unaccompanied on public transport to an in-person workshop (an action described as “amazing” by her support worker).
2. Another young person, unsure about whether the project was for them, began their participation as part of an online session before graduating to attend all subsequent sessions physically in the art-room.
3. A third young person was so inspired by the activities that she tried in workshops that she chose to continue working on her art in-between sessions at home, even encouraging her sibling to get involved.

“H enjoyed the 1st session last week and loved making the leaf prints. I have attached a photo of her work that she finished over the weekend. We had an art afternoon, even got her brother painting too. Thank you both for such a creative and interesting group incorporating walks etc. It is great. Thank you.”

- Mother of participant attending the Achieving for Children project (email sent to the artist facilitator and art therapist, June 2021)

C. Junior Art & Soul Facilitated Opportunities for Social Interaction

For the majority of those who participated in face-to-face workshops, interactions with other young people, support staff and the Art & Soul team appeared to be an important part of their experience. Besides chatting, groups cooperated on warm-up activities together, and shared

materials and ideas. Although this experience was replicated in digital space as part of the online project with Achieving for Children, it understandably took the group longer to get to know one another. Techniques such as asking participants to share their favourite music at the beginning of sessions and their artwork at the end helped them to relax over time. By the penultimate workshop, not only were the group enthusiastically conversing and complimenting each others' creative efforts using the conferencing software's chat box, but genuine warmth and friendship had developed with many participants making plans to stay in touch after the project had finished.

By contrast, in the blended sessions with Springfield University Hospital's Adolescent Outreach Team, personal interactions between participants were seriously hindered by activity having to occur simultaneously across real and digital spaces. Persistent challenges included technology failures and the decision of many participants joining from home to not switch on their video or audio.⁹ Despite this, the project team instigated a variety of measures to help create a feeling of connection between different participating groups. The most effective of these was an approach which saw the project assistant take on a co-facilitation role, supporting the lead artist by working closely online with young people, chatting and checking-in with them while sessions were underway.

Partners & Partnership-working

A. In-depth Conversations with Mental Health Providers at the Start of the Project Were Worthwhile and Resulted in the Development of Stronger Partnerships

“Rather than coming in, delivering sessions and then going away... It's important for Art & Soul to be involved in conversations for a long time in advance so that we can really work together with partners and make those relationships meaningful.”

- Project coordinator, Art & Soul

An extensive mapping exercise carried out by the Art & Soul team as part of stage one of the Junior Art & Soul project revealed CAMHS in South West London to be made up of a complex network of disparate and often disconnected charities, not-for-profit social enterprises and NHS services.¹⁰ As

⁹ It's important to note that participants were encouraged to join in with sessions in whatever way felt comfortable for them. Even when a young person chose to keep their video and/or microphone off staff continued to invite them to attend and independently they continued to log into the sessions. As the artist facilitator explains “We always made it clear that it was their choice [and] their willingness to be present in the group was as important (if not more) than creating something”.

¹⁰ According to the 'On the Edge' report, lack of collaboration between organisations in Richmond (including CAMHS), are evidence of a “system failure”, which has impacted negatively on all kinds of vulnerable communities (p.25).

part of their research, the project coordinator and lead artist facilitators spoke with approximately a dozen representatives from organisations across the boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Kingston, Hounslow and Wandsworth. Besides increasing their collective knowledge of the type of mental health support available to local children and young people, they discovered that those services that were most receptive to working in partnership with Art & Soul worked with patients with severe mental ill-health. By contrast, organisations working with young people in less critical situations seemed wary of collaboration, citing concerns around confidentiality of service users, especially those accessing provision on an individual-basis and/or anonymously. Although these interactions were not always easy, Art & Soul staff recognised that frank conversations with health sector professionals were key to understanding more about the priorities of mental health services and essential in helping the charity find “the right project partners”. Staff also learnt not to underestimate the time needed for in-depth and honest discussions about all aspects of the project with potential collaborators, who, as art psychotherapist Ursula Kelly explains, needed assurances before committing to working together:

“It’s useful to have open conversations at the start as that leads to stronger working relationships. Getting partner organisations on board from the beginning, the importance of letting them know what will happen so that they can plan and pre-empt is very important when working with vulnerable children and young people, and ultimately will support them to take ownership of the project.”

- Artist facilitator, Art & Soul



Examples of different artistic processes explored in the Springfield University Hospital project. Photos by Ursula Kelly.

B. Each Partnership Was Unique and Provided Opportunities to Reflect on the Effectiveness of Different Collaborative Models

Although there was some overlap in terms of workshop content and aspects of delivery methodology, the Junior Art & Soul project consisted of three quite different models of partnership-working in collaboration with three distinct organisations. While Achieving for Children and Springfield University Hospital had more of a clinical focus, the Priory Hospital School focused on providing education to young people unable to access their own schools for medical or psychological reasons. Despite the latter being an inpatient facility, its approach to the project was by far the most informal, which sometimes resulted in breakdowns in communication between hospital staff and Art & Soul, as well as a general lack of clarity as to the project's position alongside other activities such as wellbeing walks, which were often scheduled at the same time as workshops. In the partnerships with Springfield University Hospital and Achieving for Children, support staff, clinicians and art therapists played a particularly active role in shaping creative workshops according to what they perceived as being the best approach for their service users. In the case of Springfield University Hospital, this led to a prioritisation of flexibility resulting in the customisation of the project as it was in progress. In contrast, sessions held with Achieving for Children were carefully planned from the start and included a mixture of artistic and wellbeing exercises that were co-delivered by Art & Soul's artist facilitator and the organisation's art therapist.

As the project developed, maintaining strong relationships and good communication between Art & Soul and the three project partners became a particular priority for the project coordinator, although she and the rest of the project team were keen to acknowledge that not all of the partnerships ran smoothly all of the time. Below are outlined those aspects of collaborative working that helped to contribute to the success of Junior Art & Soul project as well as others that presented challenges:

Positive aspects of collaborative working:

- **The co-creation of a partnership agreement.** This document formalised the relationship between different stakeholders and helped guide discussions as part of a midpoint review and in 1-2-1 meetings with partners while reflecting on each individual project's progress.

- **The use of de-briefs at the end of every workshop.** These 15 minutes reflection sessions enabled artist facilitators, project assistants and (in the majority of cases) partner representatives, to share their thoughts on what was working well and what could be improved in sessions, as well as talk about any specific concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of individual participants.
- **Having the project coordinator as the main point of contact for partners.** By clearly defining the project coordinator as the 'go-to' representative for Art & Soul, oversight of the entire project was maintained and any issues raised either by partner organisations or Art & Soul staff could be quickly resolved without disrupting the ongoing delivery of workshops.
- **Partner organisations designating staff members to the Junior Art & Soul project.** In projects where staff from partner organisations were released from other duties to work on Junior Art & Soul (or as in some cases, granted additional working hours to participate), workshop planning happened more efficiently and in a way that was more equally shared by Art & Soul and the corresponding partner.
- **Joint-facilitation of workshops.** As already mentioned, in the Achieving for Children project, the expertise of Art & Soul's lead artist facilitator and the partner organisation's art therapist were combined to create a new approach to creative exercises explicitly drawing together art-making and mindfulness techniques.
- **Opportunities for partner organisations to come together to share experiences of the project.** Although this only occurred twice during the Junior Art & Soul pilot (as part of the evaluative card game Cards on the Table), meetings between stakeholders helped them to feel a sense of connection beyond their own organisation and reflect on common challenges experienced in work with children and young people with mental health challenges.

"This was a new project for all of us and our organisation had never done anything like this before so it was about going with it and learning as we went along... It was also reassuring to hear that some of the challenges we were facing were similar [to those faced by other organisations], not because of anything that we were doing. It is just the nature of the service and the people that we're working with, really."

- Representative from Springfield University Hospital

Challenging aspects of collaborative working:

- **Safeguarding procedures were a major part of workshop planning and implementation, although they were different in each partnership.** In face-to-face workshops, Art & Soul staff were asked to sign in on arrival and often had to be granted access to specific rooms on the premises. In workshops run online with Achieving for Children, the partner representative was keen to reduce safeguarding risks by keeping staff numbers to a minimum and as a result requested that only one artist (no assistant) be present.
- **A lack of detailed information about how partner organisations work.** In those partnerships where less in-depth conversations were held about organisations' ways of working, logistical challenges inevitably arose. For example, in the Priory Hospital School, workshops were regularly interrupted by participants leaving early to attend other timetabled activities, last minute room changes and even an unexpected visit by community police officers.
- **Vaguely defined roles and responsibilities including unrealistic expectations about the level of commitment required from partner organisations.** As workshops got underway, it became apparent to the Art & Soul project team that beyond an agreement in principle, support staff from partner organisations were essential to the smooth running of the project. In projects where staff from partner organisation were not been able negotiate specifically allocated hours, time could feel pressured and artist facilitators were conscious not to ask too much of their new colleagues who in addition to Junior Art & Soul were extremely busy with their day to day jobs.
- **Lack of contingency plans in the case of unexpected absences of key contacts from partner organisations.** The unexpected short-term absence of a key contact from one partner organisation and the long-term sick leave of another presented a series of logistical problems for the Art & Soul team both in relation to the facilitation of workshops and gaining access to evaluation data.

In spite of the aforementioned challenges, Art & Soul made significant strides towards the development of strong and mutually-beneficial relationships with Achieving for Children, Springfield University Hospital, and the Priory Hospital School, which resulted both in an extension to the Junior Art & Soul project (funded by the One Richmond fund), and plans to work together

again on a range of creative initiatives in 2022. When asked to reflect on those aspects of the project they had found most fulfilling, both the Art & Soul team and partner organisations unanimously agreed that they had most enjoyed their experiences of working together, as well as the positive secondary effects that these collaborative relationships had had on Junior Art & Soul's young participants:

"I think my biggest take away from this whole project has the benefit of collaborative working... I feel as though we've made a new team in these projects that involve all the partners... Trust developed from having time to be able to get to know how each organisation works and their clients. By understanding each other we've developed new ways of working that are really specific to each partnership [...] We've discovered that by preparing to create trust, we can enable change to happen [and] fulfill our shared aim of supporting young people."

- Project coordinator, Art & Soul

"I think when you're working with a group of young people, confidence and feeling comfortable is key... I'm really glad that we all got on so well and that we formed a relationship that then went on to positively benefit the kids that we are working with."

- Representative from Priory Hospital

"I would like to recognise and appreciate Ursula and Morgan's input and the work that they've done. They made everything so flexible, feasible and workable, really. A big thanks to Art & Soul for making it all so easy and for inviting us. It's been lovely."

- Representative from Springfield University Hospital

C. Staff Sessions Provided Much-Needed Feedback on Workshop Plans, Enabled Skills-Sharing and Helped to Raise the Profile of Art & Soul Within Partner Organisations

"Thanks so much Ursula, we all absolutely loved it! And wish we could do it every week."

- Attendee, staff session with Springfield University Hospital

In all three partnership projects, hands-on art-making sessions were held with staff as a means of 1) introducing the wider organisations to the Junior Art & Soul project and 2) gathering expert feedback on draft plans and formats for upcoming workshops with children and young people. These 2-3 hour-long workshops also provided staff from Art & Soul with the perfect opportunity to present the work of the charity to a diverse range of health professionals thereby helping to raise its profile beyond just select representatives who were directly involved in the project. For the participating clinicians, support staff and art therapists, these sessions were as enjoyable as they were inspirational and they complimented their evaluation comments regarding those aspects of

the workshops that they thought would work best with their service users with broader reflections on the professional possibilities of using art materials with young people as part of routine health check-ups.

Selected Quotes:

“Overall the blended-learning format worked well. I would even encourage young people at home to involve members of the family in their own tasks even if not on screen (if they get on) as it is more fun with someone doing it with you. It is a good opportunity for communicating without it being about mental health or giving instructions.”

“Mod-roc sculpture and decorating worked well – safe space to be silly and do something childish and fun.”

“Loved how customized and personal it was.”

D. The Junior Art & Soul Project Supported Staff from Art & Soul to Develop New Skills and Knowledge Relevant to Working with Children and Young People with Mental Health Challenges

In various ways, staff from Art & Soul found that the Junior Art & Soul project provided them with opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge relevant to working with children and young people with mental ill-health. For the artist facilitator working with Achieving for Children and Priory Hospital School, much of this valuable learning was as a direct result of working in collaboration with partners who brought “different strengths and ideas” although participants too challenged her preconceptions about the kinds of workshop delivery-styles that young people like themselves expected:

“I think my perceptions were changed about what the young people would take to... by slowing it down and going for a more minimal approach we were able to be very responsive to them... I think it's also about fluidity. [I've learnt] to be more experimental and that it's fine to let things go.”

Fluidity, flexibility and an emphasis on art processes as opposed to artistic outcomes were also highlighted by one of the project assistant as being the only feasible way to drive forward a project working with young people who were struggling daily with mental health challenges, and who may, as a result be unable to commit to attending a full course of workshops. For the lead artist working with Springfield University Hospital, the most important lessons were those regarding what she saw as her main responsibility: to create a calm and supportive atmosphere in which

young people were free to relax and express themselves creatively, irrespective of technological challenges or external pressures.

Art & Soul and Covid 19

Participatory Art Practice in the Context of a Global Pandemic Presented New Challenges As Well As One or Two Opportunities

“Covid gave us even more reason to do the project but it also presented all kinds of unforeseen challenges.”

- Artist facilitator, Art & Soul

Since early 2020, Coronavirus Covid-19 has radically changed the world and the ways in which we live and work. In its attempts to reduce the spread of the virus, the UK government has imposed restrictions, from self-isolation and limits to freedom of movement to the closure of schools and “non-essential” businesses and services; a secondary effect of which has been to further entrench economic and social inequalities already established by a decade of austerity. While the pressures of the global health crisis on NHS staff, patients and services (including CAMHS), have been well documented,¹¹ the pandemic’s adverse socioeconomic and psychosocial effects on workers in the creative and cultural industries (CCI) have received less attention.¹² For the majority of artist practitioners lucky enough to remain in employment during the pandemic, remote working using video conferencing software such as Microsoft teams or Zoom has become the norm, offering both opportunities and challenges although not always in equal measure.

By March 2020, Art & Soul had joined tens of thousands of other small charities across the UK in adapting its programmes in response to the pandemic and the changing needs of its local community. Remote Connectivity, an online project working with adults with mental ill-health, ran from March-December 2020, giving staff the opportunity to pilot innovative approaches to online delivery while maintaining social distancing. With the launch of Junior Art & Soul in October 2020, the project coordinator and artist facilitators were already used to having meetings with one another online and this practice continued as they began to develop new relationships with the

11 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/09/extent-of-mental-health-crisis-in-england-at-terrifying-level>

12 According to research carried out by University College London, workers in the creative and cultural industries (CCI) are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic’s adverse socioeconomic and psychosocial effects owing to a combination of pre-pandemic financial precarity, the long-term closure of cultural production sites and the fact that many are ineligible for state support. See May et al. (2020).

project's partner organisations. For a team in which all members of staff work one day a week, this way of working had its advantages. As the project coordinator explained: *"There are a lot of benefits...it's saved a lot of time...and it's helped me to develop partnership work because I'm able to go to meetings in a much more relaxed way than I would be worrying about getting half-way across London."*

Undoubtedly, in other ways the pandemic presented the Art & Soul team with a range of logistical challenges. In remote and blended sessions it led to preparation time for workshops doubling as the lead artists had to order art materials to their homes before creating and posting individual activity packs to participants joining sessions remotely. It also increased work-related stress for some staff, especially those who struggled with slow internet at home and who sometimes had to find alternative locations to deliver online workshops. Finally, it inevitably changed the quality of engagement with participants and this was particularly true of blended sessions, in which it proved difficult to navigate and maintain connections between the physical and online space due to poor audio quality and internet connection.

Despite these difficulties, by the end of the project it became clear that in providing children and young people with the option of accessing workshops online and from home, Art & Soul was not only implementing public health regulations but also developing new ways of working that responded first and foremost to the specific requirements of participants: *"It's not just numbers and geographical reach, it's actually people who have varying needs... or social anxiety or issues around socialising... The whole point is to make sure people are able to come into the project in various ways and once you open that door, the possibilities are endless"* (interview with project coordinator). This attempt to increase accessibility for young people had the secondary effect of ensuring that one of the project coordinators, who was shielding for medical reasons, could also continue her work.

5.

**WHAT NEXT FOR
JUNIOR ART &
SOUL ?**

Short-term goals (2-3 months)

- Partner organisations and participants invited to Art & Soul's online and in-person festival
- Evaluation report shared with partner organisations and feedback sought
- Research carried out into possible spaces (conferences, workshops, journals, etc.), in which to share with peers organisation learning related to work with children, young people, art and mental health
- Check-in meetings held with partner organisations to discuss future collaborations

Mid-term goals (3-6 months)

- Using the Baring Foundation's Creatively Minded and Young report (2020) as a guide, contact made with other creative organisations in South West London working with young people with mental ill-health leading to the formation of informal network of like-minded organisations
- Research carried out into commissioning models including via with existing and new partners¹³
- Research carried out into possible project formats supporting children, young people and their families to engage in art-making and wellbeing activity

Long-term goals (6-12 months)

- Project working with a mixture of new and existing partners initiated including at least one commissioned element from CAMHS service based in South West London

¹³ "It seems reasonable... to conclude that the need for NHS treatment services is likely to increase very substantially in the near future and that arts and creativity can play an even more valuable complementary role. At the same time, pressure on funding for both the NHS and the arts will never have been greater." p.4 Creatively Minded, Baring Foundation (2020).

6.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Keeping in touch / Reaching out. Art & Soul will greatly benefit from maintaining its relationships with Achieving for Children, Springfield University Hospital and Priory Hospital but it should also continue to explore possible new partnerships with NHS services and voluntary organisations operating in both the health and arts sectors. Not all partnerships need to be created with the same goals in mind; for example while some may be characterised by periodic meetings to discuss innovations or challenges in the field of arts and mental health support for young people in South West London, others may be more explicitly collaborative and result in joint-applications for funding opportunities.

2. The power of training. Staff sessions developed as part of the Junior Art & Soul project reveal the potential benefit of inter-sector training both to the charity's staff body (who have an appetite to learn more about health and wellbeing), and partner organisations (who are keen to develop confidence in using art as part of clinical interventions). Joint-training could form part of future project plans although Art & Soul may also be interested in pursuing the possibility of offering more formalised CPD sessions to colleagues working in mental health provision, especially if this may provide a first step towards becoming acquainted with NHS commissioning models.

3. Sustainability and specialisation. As Art & Soul's work with young people becomes more established (and remains a strategic priority), the charity may want to think about the possible benefits of this strand of work being overseen by a designated young people's project coordinator. As it stands, Art & Soul has made an important start in ensuring that research into CAMHS and overall the development of organisational expertise form part of its new initiatives. This open-minded approach to the pursuit of specialist knowledge and expertise formalised as an R&D phase is likely to be beneficial to any future projects.

4. An integrated and collaborative approach to evaluation. The evaluation process of Junior Art & Soul revealed important lessons for Art & Soul staff, not least regarding workable evaluation methods and methodologies as part of future projects working with children and young people with complex mental health needs. Work still needs to be done to establish whether UCL wellbeing questionnaires or more clinical-based approaches such as ROMS are better suited to an art workshop setting and in future it may be helpful if Art & Soul has conversations with partners about a shared approach to evaluation with joint agreements on who will be responsible for data collection and where that data will be stored. Excellent guidance produced by the Child Outcomes Research Consortium offers suggestions of ways in which practitioners might be able to implement questionnaires in ways that include young people.¹⁴ Although developed within a clinical context,

14 1. Provide a summary of what the measures are for, why you're using them and how they might be used alongside other kinds of evaluative methods (Explain); 2. Make evaluation part of the session, do it collaboratively, Let young people know that they have a choice and can opt-out of questionnaires (Talk it through); 3. Involve young people in looking at the results and if possible make time at the end of a project to think about how the outcome measures might highlight to young people where there want to go next with their art-making (Go through the results); 4. Think about whether a young person needs support filling out questionnaires – not everyone feels comfortable or safe filling them out (Do you understand the questions? Do you need anything to be rephrased? Do you feel comfortable and safe right now? Would you like to talk about it?). Taken from the video "Let's get real: How do young people relate to filling in mental health outcome measures?" <https://www.corc.uk.net/for-young-people/>

there is lots of information here that may be of particular relevance to Art & Soul:
<https://www.corc.uk.net/for-young-people/>



Key words selected by staff from Art & Soul during 1-2-1 Reflection Interviews to describe their overall experience of the Junior Art & Soul project.

7.

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