

HARP COVID-19 Sprint Challenge

How could the arts support people living through lockdown?
How could access to arts interventions be improved?

Our sprint challenge aimed to build our knowledge to support more people in Wales.

September 2020





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Foreword

By Rosie - Arts and Health Programme Manager, Y Lab.

I joined the Y Lab Arts and Health programme in January 2020 after working in arts and health delivery across the UK for eight years. A lot had moved on in this field in that time, but key questions remained around how creativity could support everyone's health and wellbeing, and be meaningfully embedded and sustained in NHS and community settings.

The programme, an Y Lab, Arts Council of Wales and Welsh NHS Confederation partnership, seemed to me a much-needed combination of top level and on-the-ground collaboration between the health and arts worlds. Big questions require big thinking, so I was pleased that Nesta was applying its expertise in innovation and system change to look for solutions, right here in Wales. I was also delighted to be working with a team that valued research, rigour and a people powered ethos. So, in bringing all this together 'HARP' was born: health, arts, research, people. Four words with equal standing in our programme and of equal importance in helping to address equity, scale and sustainability in arts and health in Wales.

By early March 2020 we had engaged four Welsh health boards to embark on this innovation journey with us via the Nesta 100 Day Challenge. We were offering coaching and facilitation support, alongside grants, to bring front line healthcare staff together with artists and NHS leaders to really get into the heart of the health system and develop new approaches. We were set to launch our 100 Days on 22 April 2020 with a two-day event in Cardiff.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the challenges around delivering the 100 Day Challenge were clear, and significant. With amazing speed and agility, health board staff repurposed and refocused. With equal speed, arts and community venues closed and in-person events were cancelled (including ours). This all left huge questions about how to still make a contribution via HARP: we know creativity and innovation could help address the challenges the pandemic brought, but how could we facilitate this if nobody could meet face to face, and the NHS was facing its biggest ever crisis?

Once we'd got over the initial shock, it seemed to us that these questions were in fact a huge eye opener. After all, hadn't there been some people who couldn't leave their house before? How had we been supporting them previously (or not) to be innovative and creative? What about convening cross-Wales events where someone always had to travel for up to 5 hours before even starting? Had we just been going for the easy options all along? Perhaps this difficult moment was also an opportunity: it seemed to us that the research, rigour and people powered ethos of HARP was needed now more than ever. We felt there must be a way to do something, and

knew that doing something would be better than doing nothing.

This report is about what we did - the HARP Covid-19 Sprint Challenge - and what we learned. In the Sprint, we brought together a team of 12 pan-Wales arts and health professionals, via weekly Zoom webinars, to innovate at pace in order to creatively support groups of people they identified as particularly hard hit by lockdown, without any of us ever leaving our homes. The amazing team created and curated new experiences, new art works, new websites, new platforms. They inspired people who needed support to take ownership of their own time and creativity, to try something new, to enjoy themselves; and to feel better.

For me, there are many standout stories of impact in the Sprint. The 80-something person living alone who'd never been on YouTube before, but who now uses a Google Cardboard headset and virtual reality videos to inspire them to draw every day. A person with ME who is in bed for 23 hours a day, but who was able to see their art works in an online gallery. A neuropsychiatry team in a health board who now have vital and meaningful remote contact with patients. A video of a ballet dancer in a wheelchair performing to Carmen, in their living room.

These examples show what is possible even in the most isolated and challenging times when creativity is brought to the table. The Sprint team were fantastic to work with; they brought determination, energy, care, empathy and genuine teamwork, despite the internet glitches, cats on laptops (and one puppy), tears, frustrations and all of us navigating the monumental impacts of the pandemic with no roadmap. But most of all the Sprint was a story of innovation: collaborating, learning, experimenting. Applying empathy, critical thinking and creativity to a problem (in this case, a really big problem) and coming up with stuff that works. It wasn't perfect; we were on the same learning curve about the mute/unmute button as everyone else, and we were as isolated as the people we were trying to reach. But as the impacts of the pandemic and social distancing continue to loom large for the foreseeable future, we now have a basis for future innovation to build on.

There's lots still to try and to learn in the next 12-18 months of HARP. We want to continue exploring what arts and health delivery and impact really means, and learn how we can reach into the hardest to reach places by adopting an ethos of collaboration, creativity and teamwork. We want to continue innovating, and continue supporting people.

Bring it on!

What does 'innovation' mean to you?

(a pantoum¹ poem by the HARP Covid-19 Sprint team)

An ongoing project towards a horizon
Hidden in plain sight is a new view
New visions being creative
Discovering new paths which help us see our destination.

Hidden in plain sight is a new view
Plant, nurture, grow, reach, flourish, supersede
Discovering new paths which help us see our destination
Release yourself from the expected.

Plant, nurture, grow, reach, flourish, supersede
New visions being creative
Release yourself from the expected
An ongoing project towards a horizon.

¹The pantoum is a form of poetry composed of a series of quatrains; the second and fourth lines of each stanza are repeated as the first and third lines of the next stanza.

Executive Summary

- The HARP Covid-19 Sprint was a time-limited, experimental innovation project, based in Wales. Our aim was to inspire and support arts and health professionals to develop new creative activities that could help to mitigate some of the negative impacts of the pandemic on peoples' health and wellbeing.
- Our learning aims were twofold. Firstly, we wanted to learn about how arts and health delivery models could be adapted to fit lockdown regulations whilst still providing high-quality engagements to support health and wellbeing. Secondly, we aimed to learn about supporting a team of innovators in a remote, online setting.
- Y Lab, working with Nesta's People Powered Results team, convened 12 arts and health professionals from across Wales, via an open call, to work with people from four distinct groups:
 - People with pre-existing mental health conditions and brain injury survivors in the community
 - D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists
 - People experiencing loneliness (often with pre-existing health conditions)
 - Older people shielding and isolated from younger relatives
- HARP supported the teams to consider their target group's journeys, assets and challenges and set some goals, before designing creative solutions and testing them. through which the four teams were set the task of designing and testing creative projects that would support people from the four distinct groups.
- All four teams managed to successfully test their ideas, which included: daily sketching and writing activities inspired by virtual reality experiences; small online groups creating story chains using a variety of art forms; families creating art (music, dancing and drawing) together online; and D/ deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists being commissioned to produce art works about their pandemic experiences to educate and inspire others.
- There was a rich set of creative outputs from all the teams, and a great deal of learning about how to deliver arts and health (and innovation) remotely. Especially important were building trust and connections both in health and community environments, investing time in navigating new realities and processes for arts and health delivery, and staying focussed on participants' health and wellbeing.
- The results and learnings from the Sprint show that it was possible - and necessary - to be creative and innovative in the challenging, extraordinary situation the pandemic presented. Whilst the online environment could not replicate face-to-face engagement, if approached carefully it was still a vital vehicle (and indeed a lifeline) for connection and creativity for the most isolated people. This includes those who may never engage face-to-face.
- More testing is needed in order to build on the possibilities explored here. Specifically, it would be beneficial for future similar projects to have more focus on scaling and sustaining good ideas within health and community systems, more rigorous evaluation and additional team development and support.

Background

When the Covid-19 pandemic began in March 2020, we wanted to add value and have a positive impact through our HARP (Health, Arts, Research, People) partnership with Arts Council of Wales and Welsh NHS Confederation.

We knew there was a need for support among many groups of people during lockdown and that the arts could play an important role in addressing those needs. Conversely, there were also significant challenges in convening and supporting people creatively.

A lot of creative and innovative work was already happening in response to the pandemic, however many observed that some of the most vulnerable people were also the most isolated - with the least access to creative support for their health and wellbeing. There was also limited space for learning and collaboration, and professional artists and arts organisations had most of their work put on hold.

“Making art gives us a place to distil our human experience”
Grayson Perry, Aug 2020



The HARP Sprint Challenge

We believed that bringing professional artists, health boards and arts organisations together to work as a team in a safe, collaborative space might help them to better navigate the new realities of arts and health for these vulnerable groups.

So, in May 2020 we convened a team of 12 artists and arts and health professionals. Over a period of 11 weeks, the team considered which cohorts they wanted to work with (i.e. those most in need of support), mapped those groups' needs, set goals and tested four ideas in four sub teams. With support from Nesta's People Powered Results team, Y Lab facilitated the design and testing process through weekly

webinars, templates, funding and coaching, using creative methods and reflective practice to support the team to experiment and consider the impact of their ideas, as well as what worked and what didn't.

Y Lab's public involvement and patient experience in research (PIPER) group for Arts and Health provided lived experience input to intervention and research design. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of our public involvement activity and PIPER group participants represent all the protected characteristics of the Equality Act (2010) as well as engagement with 10 different art forms.



Taking a People Powered approach in the HARP Sprint

The global health crisis provided a rare moment in time when people across complex systems had a clear sense of the needs of others and, for many, their own individual role in the collective response to the crisis. The HARP Sprint tapped into the human spirit's curiosity to continuously test our assumptions about what is possible and explore how innovation can leverage human ingenuity.

The People Powered Results team at Nesta has been pioneering new approaches to achieving change and innovation in complex systems since 2014. These approaches are smarter, faster, collaborative and more inclusive of citizens and people working at the front line. But how could The HARP Sprint team effectively apply these existing people powered approaches in an online environment?

The People Powered Results team supported Y Lab to build the right conditions, structures and support online that would enable teams to collaborate and rapidly experiment with new ideas and new ways of working. From ways of working to idea generation, online activities were designed to unlock individual and collective creativity and drive change forward. The ability to apply tried and tested existing methods in effective ways online meant the Sprint was able to rapidly harness people's innate curiosity and create a space to spin ideas into action.

Drawing upon a range of People Powered Results methods, tools and frameworks, The HARP Sprint was able to connect people online through creativity and create the space for innovation. Ultimately creating better outcomes for people.

Charlene Stagon, Programme Manager, People Powered Results



Beth Crockett for Nesta People Powered Results

What did the teams do?

The four teams tested the following ideas in July and August 2020:

1. '15 A Day': for people experiencing loneliness

Can a week of completing daily creative activities inspired by virtual reality experiences help to improve mood and wellbeing?



Image: Biletto Editorial on Unsplash

Background

The team acknowledged that many people experiencing loneliness had a pre-existing health condition and were isolated pre-lockdown. The team also considered the universal nature of 'aleness' (especially during lockdown) and the potential benefits of solitude for creativity. Their goal was to kickstart awareness that small, daily creative practice can be good for our wellbeing.

What did the team do?

The team used virtual reality experiences to inspire creative responses, asking 10 people experiencing loneliness to engage for 15 minutes a day for 7 consecutive days. Each day consisted of first watching a virtual reality video via a Google Cardboard headset which was posted to the group. The videos were on YouTube (so pre-existing) but were carefully chosen by the team, including experiences under the sea, viewing the Northern Lights, space travelling and exploring a lion enclosure at a safari park. The participants were then asked to watch the video a second time whilst simultaneously creating something - a line drawing, or a poem.

All instructions were provided through daily emails and completed individually, however participants knew they were part of a group all participating the same week, so there was an impetus to complete the activities daily.

What happened?

All 10 participants participated at some point; 9 participated for 4 out of the 7 days. All created at least one outstanding artwork during the

project and were represented in an online gallery (using Artsteps). A group gallery viewing was held on Zoom where participants shared their thoughts and feelings about the week. Participants were asked to complete a bespoke wellbeing measure, before and after the whole project, and before and after each daily exercise. Over the whole project all demonstrated improved mood, and 8 participants reported dramatic improvements in mood after participating. On a few days 4 participants reported feeling worse after participating. One participant said the immersive drawing was as effective as EMDR therapy for shifting her mood.

It appeared that once participants overcame an aversion to engaging with the technology they really enjoyed it and it provided new experiences for some people who had so far shunned online experiences. A couple of participants remarked that monitoring their wellbeing with the measure also seemed to have a therapeutic effect on participants in helping them to be more aware of their daily state.

Team

Ian Cooke-Tapia - illustrator, Cooked Illustrations
Esyllt George - arts and health coordinator, Cwm Taf Health Board
Dr Maria Hayes - independent artist and researcher



2. 'Family Arts Roundabout': for elderly people shielding and younger relatives

Can creativity help to bridge the technology and generation gap to help connect older people with their younger relatives and reduce isolation?



Image: Family Arts Roundabout

Background

A lot of people across a range of settings that had become isolated and were no longer able to see their friends and families and carry out usual daily tasks. The team observed that older people and those shielding were at particular risk of losing their sense of purpose and becoming isolated and lonely.

The team wanted to connect people creatively using the arts, to each use their own skills and experience to collaborate and create an interesting and stimulating project that would connect young and elderly people together.

What did the team do?

The team developed a visual, dance and singing project called 'Family Arts Roundabout': a dance professional, visual arts practitioner and a professional choir leader deliver a bespoke, enjoyable creative project to families who may not be able to see each other physically during lockdown / social distancing.

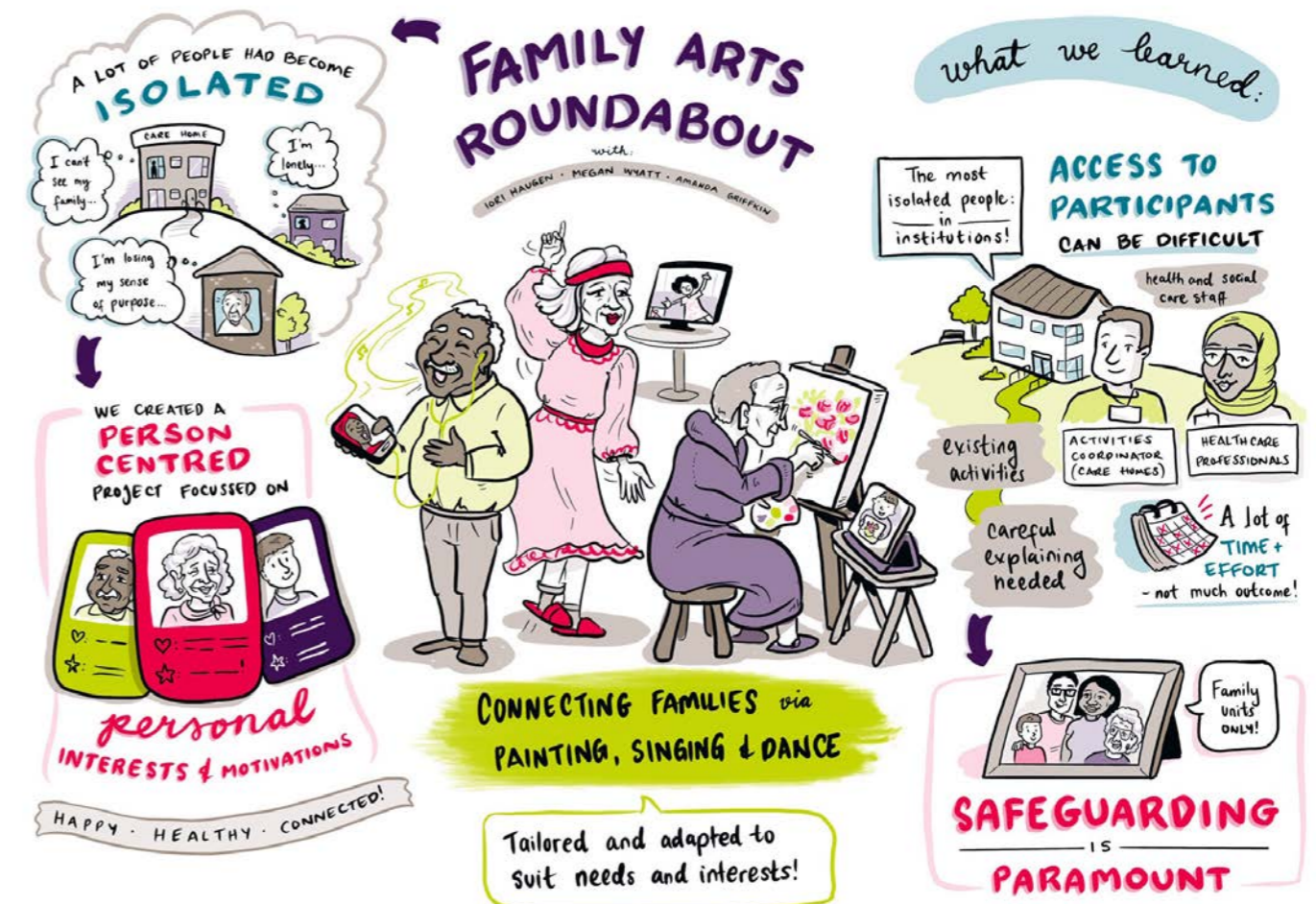
There were spaces for 3 families to take part in a series of 5 online workshops over a 4 week period, in painting, singing and dance. The goal was for the family to produce something together, a video or a piece of artwork, all done remotely. All activities were tailored and adapted to suit the needs and interests of each family.

What happened?

The team worked with 2 families in the end - one with a resident in a care home and another via the Teenage Cancer Trust ward in Cardiff. For access to participants the team were very reliant on care home activities coordinators and healthcare professionals but once they had navigated this these key staff were crucial in the success of the project. The families engaged positively, and the activities (all tailored to their interests and wishes) offered them a focused, fun and creative way to engage with their families via Zoom. There was also rich learning about facilitating different art form activities - music, dance and art - and the conversations these inspired for the family groups beyond the usual, often limited online interactions.

Team

Iori Haugen - freelance musician and choir leader
 Amanda Griffkin - artistic director, Impelo
 Dr Megan Wyatt - artist and visiting researcher, Wrexham Glyndwr University



3. 'Rengarific': for adults with mental health diagnoses and brain injury survivors

Could creating group story chains ('Rengas') help people with mental health challenges and brain injury survivors to feel more connected and less anxious?

Background

People with mental health diagnoses were disconnected from their usual support and interaction mechanisms; engagements were limited to telephone calls and/or video, which caused concern for healthcare staff supporting two particular groups:

- People with mental health lived experience living in the communities in South and West Wales, who usually attend the VC Gallery in Pembrokeshire
- Neuropsychiatry patients (brain injury survivors) who usually attend the Hafan Y Coed day centre in Cardiff, but couldn't during lockdown.

The team wanted to improve connections between peer groups using creative activities in order to build individuals' resilience, confidence and self esteem.

What did the team do?

In 3 groups, participants attended 3-4 weekly group online sessions where they created story chains ('Rengas') of artworks, inspired by each other's work and their pandemic experiences. Sessions were facilitated by artists and/or healthcare professionals from the VC Gallery and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

For the VC Gallery groups, most participants were already known to the Gallery; the team found it harder to recruit people who weren't already connected to them. The Hafan Y Coed (HYC) brain injury survivors group were unknown to the Rengarific team and contact

with them had to be managed carefully through the HYC team. The HYC team who also needed support to navigate risk assessments, supplying tablets for participants and enabling Zoom access. Overcoming these challenges for this project meant the HYC and Cardiff and Vale arts team could then use these processes for other sessions and projects to help more isolated patients and staff.

What happened?

Participation at the sessions / attendance was very good, with participants engaging well and creating dozens of powerful artworks - poems, pictures and photographs. Many have followed a lockdown theme, reflecting feelings of being trapped, in an unfamiliar and scary environment that's very isolating.

The project gave participants the opportunity to express the challenges they have faced during lockdown, making connections with each other. Many have described feeling empowered through this process; one participant, a brain injury survivor, was previously a professional artist but had been unable to create anything since their injury - this project changed that for them. Others have developed new passions for writing, drawing and photography, encouraging them to get out of the house and become more comfortable with their situations.

Team

Steph Cross - project manager, the VC Gallery
 Johan Skre - arts on prescription manager, Swansea Bay Health Board
 Melanie Wotton - arts project manager, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board



Image: Drawing by Lucy, Rengarific participant



4. 'Conversations / Future Selves': for D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent artists

How can we platform the voices of the marginalised during the pandemic, and make sure that D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists can communicate their unique experiences of this time?



Image: Still from piece by Sophie Stone, 'Conversations /Future Selves'

Background

The team wanted to inform and promote empathy towards D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people by creating a resource for arts and health organisations to learn. They were concerned by the outline of a 'normative template' and how this very specific moment offered an opportunity to reimagine and support the call that D/deaf, neurodivergent and disabled people are on that centre stage as we rebuild our post-pandemic world. Their goals were to use creativity and art to give a voice to marginalised groups, tell a story to encourage understanding and creatively reflect on what works and what doesn't - advocating to arts and health professionals / bodies / organisations towards unlocking best practice.

What did the team do?

The team commissioned 6 x D/deaf and/or disabled artists to produce pieces of art about pandemic experiences, to share with wider arts and health communities via a website: Conversations Future Selves. They followed a traditional open brief process and appointed 6 artists, for whom the team built a website to showcase their work. They met with all of the artists and where possible introduced them to each other so they could talk about the process of making the work and gather learning from each other.

What happened?

Through commissioning artists, the team worked across artforms, supporting artists making work

across dance, music, spoken word, painting and video. As of 10 August, the website had 426 unique visitors; 176 of those visited on 31 July, when the website launched.

Through conversations with artists, the team learned that making these works has often reinforced or changed their practice. Some have said it's given them an opportunity to try a different direction which they now want to explore afterwards, or to work in a new media for the final piece - e.g video. The domestic setting has also shone a light on disability at home, which is not necessarily always visible, as a source of creative inspiration and practice for the artists.

In the context of this project, the team were considering wellbeing in the long term and looking at this particular moment as a catalyst for change. In creating a space for artists to be listened to and supported to create new work, which reflects on the time we're in and what their hopes and fears are for the future, the team hope that this project enables other people to feel seen and heard.

Team

Jonny Cotsen - freelance performing artist and access consultant
 Sarah Goodey - arts development manager, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
 Louise Hobson - independent creative producer



Financial support

10 Participating team members (or their organisations) received small grants of £1,000 each from Nesta. Esyllt George and Melanie Wotton's contributions were supported within their roles at the health boards (posts funded by Arts Council of Wales). There was also a small budget to pay freelance artists for delivery of ideas and supply art materials to participants.

Research

There is limited evidence on the impact of remotely delivering creative activities that benefit health and the ways professionals and participants engage with technology. The Y Lab Research Fellow, Dr Sofia Vougioukalou, completed interviews, focus groups and participatory action research with the team members, which is now being written up.

The study is titled 'Arts & Health in Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic: addressing challenges and improving access to online delivery'. The purpose of the research is to better understand the impact of online arts participation during the Covid-19 pandemic and to address barriers to remote access. It focussed on the online delivery aspects of the Sprint, both as an innovation method and as a vehicle for supporting new arts and health interventions to be developed during the pandemic.

We found that professionals working in arts and health demonstrated increased capacity for resilience through the uptake of online tools and the engagement of new audiences. This enabled them to adequately react to unexpected crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic which threatened the arts and health sector as well as the health of participants.

What did we learn?

Given the time constraints, the significant (and evolving) impacts of the pandemic and the remote delivery aspects, before meeting the team we were anticipating mixed success with a strong focus instead on experimentation and learning.

However, our expectations were far exceeded as all four teams were able to successfully design, set up and test high quality pilot projects with participants. The effort the team put in was huge, and there was a rich and extensive set of creative and learning outputs from the four projects.

Examples of some of the practical learning includes:

Recruitment / access

- Recruiting participants was easier when they were already known to the teams or facilitators; the teams found it harder to recruit people who weren't already connected to them.
- When working in a health setting, contact with participants often had to be managed through health or social care staff, within those structures. The teams were therefore reliant on the engagement of these staff (this had both positive and negative effects on recruitment) so had to invest time in those relationships to build confidence that the projects were safe and high quality.

- Health and social care teams sometimes needed support to navigate the technological and bureaucratic aspects (such as completing risk assessments for an online space, supplying tablets for participants, enabling Zoom access). However, being able to overcome these challenges meant that health teams could then use these processes for other creative and non-creative support
- It's important to allow more time than expected for setting arts activities up online, and for working in the most challenging places (institutions) with isolated people.
- Working remotely requires great care and planning– more so than face to face.
- Safeguarding is paramount and can affect the progress of arts projects online.
- Lockdown easing shifted some assumptions (e.g. care homes allowing visitors).

Creative facilitation and project design

- Lived experience was important to the team, who all sought ways to incorporate participants' views in the design of their activities
- If giving instructions remotely (e.g. by e-mail) for creative activities outside a group setting, it's important to be careful with language when setting written instructions, and to use short text based instructions, or record them to be listened to.
- The quality of art materials and experiences is crucial; the facilitator should be trained in working with that particular group and ready to take advice from healthcare staff so that activities can be tailored.
- If using creative stimuli it's important to choose content carefully. Individual preferences should be accounted for if possible.
- For sharing work, it's important to include clear instructions for participants on how to take good quality photographs of their artwork, or record themselves.
- Innovative arts ideas (such as VR or multi-art form) can come across as complex and need careful explaining to potential participants and partners.
- Even when not necessarily prescribing an artform for a commissioning project the platform can only be digital - this can lead to a significant amount of work to build websites and display content appropriately.
- Our experience suggests that having parity between artists and producers / health boards was an important ingredient in supporting high quality service design, however clear roles and responsibilities need to be outlined clearly from the beginning.

Our reflections: the Sprint as an innovation process

- Collaboration and creativity were the cornerstones of innovation in the Sprint.
- The Sprint was effective at forming new partnerships and being inclusive, particularly geographically. This encouraged us to learn that with careful facilitation it is possible to work well in a team online, even with people you did not previously know.
- It was important to fully support innovators' access requirements, allowing a budget for this too.
- Participation grants for freelance artists allowed some of them to gain more experience in designing interventions (rather than just delivering them)
- Clearer roles and responsibilities may have helped some teams to communicate better with each other, along with continued coaching support

- We observed that it was important to provide coaching support, a rhythm of weekly engagement and a safe space for reflection to help preserve team members' resilience and energy; the online environment presented difficulties as well as opportunities for the artists involved.
- Injecting pace into the process helped to keep up momentum, but we also needed to show flexibility and extend the timescales by 1 month as the set up phase took longer than expected
- Whilst all projects showed promise, the small scale of the pilots means that bigger, longer testing periods would be needed to produce rigorous impact data
- The Sprint may have benefitted from a slightly longer time period, to allow for more time to be invested by participants in the set up and evaluation of the projects; this would also have necessitated bigger grants for participating (for freelancers in particular).
- Creative stimuli proved to be effective tools for supporting innovators. As facilitators we used many creative methods - poetry, visualisation, movement, creating group art like word clouds - both as reflective tools and also to help motivate the team and help them to consider what innovation and quality mean.

HARP TEAM MEETING

“REMOTE TEAM WORKING IS POSSIBLE AND CAN BE BOTH CREATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE”

“I WILL RE THINK MY POSITION FROM INDEPENDENT TO INTERDEPENDENT. TO WORK BOTH 'IN' AND 'ON' INSTITUTIONS.”

“I WOULD LIKE TO CARRY ON WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH PROFESSIONALS FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES. I WILL DEVELOP MORE REMOTE ARTS PROJECTS NOW I KNOW IT'S POSSIBLE.”

“THE MATURITY OF THIS GROUP WITHIN THE ARTS AND HEALTH WORLD IS PALPABLE”

“I WILL TEACH/EDUCATE OTHERS AND CHALLENGE MYSELF IN NEW SPACES (ONLINE AND PHYSICAL). IT WAS VERY SATISFYING TO BE SUPPORTING OTHER ARTISTS TO MAKE WORK WITH THE HEALTH BOARD.”

“I'VE LEARNED THAT THE CREATIVE PROCESS IS IN ITSELF HEALING AND THERAPEUTIC. WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE REQUIRES HIGH LEVELS OF PERSONAL, CREATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, BUT IT'S WORTH IT.”

“WE WANT TO DEVELOP OUR CONCEPT FURTHER AND TAKE IT OUT TO OTHER GROUPS”

“WE HELPED TO EMBED THE VIRTUAL DELIVERY OF ARTS INTO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN A HOSPITAL AND WE WOULD LIKE THIS TO CONTINUE”

“I WILL WELCOME NEW CHALLENGES AND CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION FOR WELLBEING THROUGH VIRTUAL REALITY IN MY WORK WITH THE HEALTH BOARD.”

“AS A RESULT OF THIS WORK I NOW HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF TO WORK WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL TEAM.”

Image by Laura Sorvala

Quotes

Quotes from team members about taking part in the HARP Sprint

“I will take forward that remote team working is possible and can be both creative and productive. I also now have much greater awareness of the experiences and needs of D/ deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people and I intend to engage colleagues in the health board and third sector staff in discussions about how we can better address these groups' needs” - Sarah

“I will teach / educate others and challenge myself in new spaces (online and physical). I particularly enjoyed the commissioning process, as it was very satisfying to be supporting other artists to make work that told their own stories.” - Jonny

“I will welcome new challenges and continue to explore the possibilities of creative expression for wellbeing through virtual reality in my work with the health board.” - Elyllt

“When imagining future research and projects, I'm now thinking about how to rethink my position from independent to interdependent. To work both 'in' and 'on' institutions, to ensure there is time to listen and support holding space for others.” - Louise

“I've learned that the creative process is in itself healing and therapeutic. I'll take forward that facilitated work that comes from the core of an artist's practice can have an amplified impact and that working with vulnerable people requires high levels of personal, creative and professional responsibility, but it's worth it.” - Maria

“We helped to embed the virtual delivery of arts into mental health services in a hospital and a community gallery and we would like this to continue. We also want to develop a website to enable broader public access” - Melanie

“I would like to carry on working collaboratively with professionals from other disciplines. I will develop more remote arts projects now I know it's possible.” - Megan

“We want to develop our concept further and take it out to other groups with mental health problems to confirm our outcomes. As a result of being part of the Sprint I now have more confidence in myself to work within a professional team.” - Steph

“I've been very inspired with everyone's creative, articulate and progressive attitude. The maturity of this group within the arts and health world is palpable, and I really hope that I can work with everyone again in the future.” - Iori

Recommendations

We encourage any partners and funders in health, arts and community settings who are innovating (or who have been during Covid-19) to consider bringing the following elements to their work as a result of what we've learned:

- To fund, and advocate for, high-quality, guided forms of creative expression and activity for people during extraordinary events, to help them navigate challenges, reflect and process their experiences
- To map access points, assets and challenges for target groups of people - preferably by asking them directly what they can, and would like to, engage in for their health and wellbeing
- To value collaboration and inclusivity as core components of innovation, fostering equal partnerships between artists and healthcare providers
- To recognise the importance of - and invest in - the administration, coordination and brokering of creative projects for health and wellbeing. Quality takes time, tenacity and skilled project management alongside the best creative input
- To think creatively about how to engage all groups of people with technology, and to value creative practice as a means of overcoming technological barriers.
- To advocate for wider and higher quality digital inclusion so that remote health and arts activities can be fairly accessed by everyone
- To recognise and admit a wider range of evaluation practices and methodologies, balanced with the need for certainty around measuring impact, safety and quality
- To continue to champion creativity as a core element of everyone's wellbeing, with the potential to connect us to ourselves and others to alleviate suffering and prevent worsening mental and physical health

Sample of art works from the Sprint projects



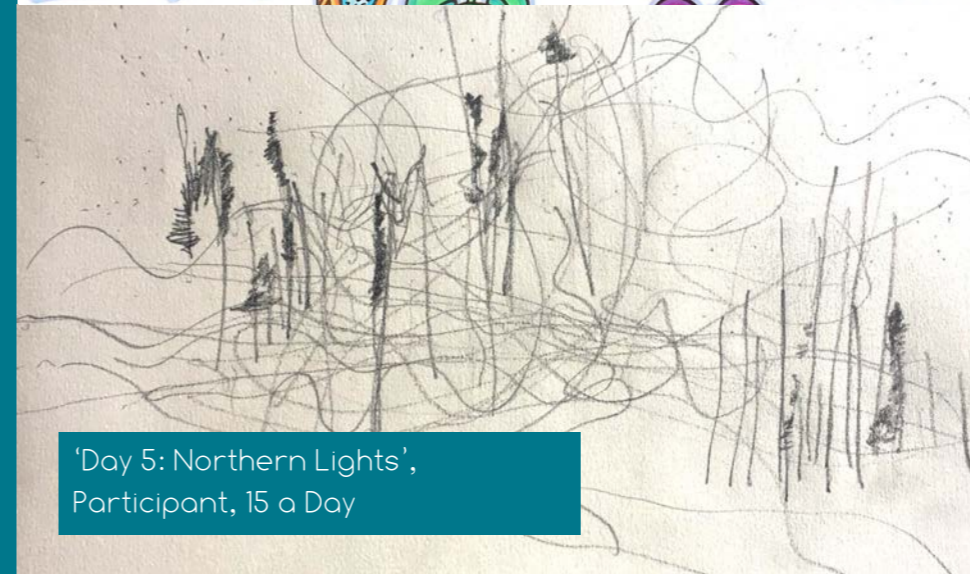
Megan Wyatt, Artist facilitator,
Family Arts Roundabout



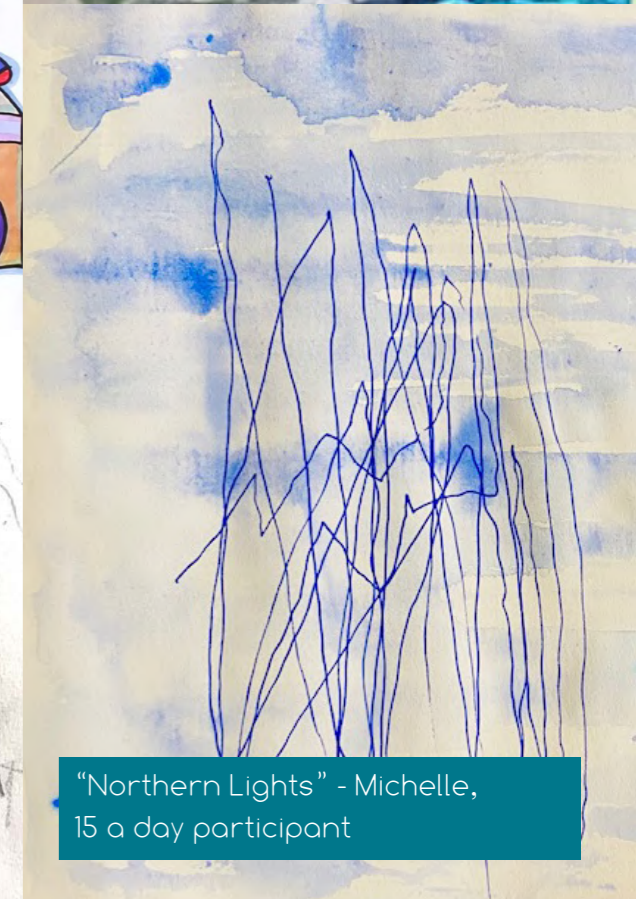
"Under The Sea" - Su,
15 a day participant



'Timeless' - Maxine,
Rengarific participant



'Day 5: Northern Lights',
Participant, 15 a Day



"Northern Lights" - Michelle,
15 a day participant

Next steps

The Sprint model is new in itself as a way of innovating; although it draws on other methods such as Nesta's People Powered Results, it has also been heavily adapted to an online setting and with creative methodologies, research and artist engagement. This has had its challenges and limitations, however we believe the model of working has been successful in producing high-quality innovations, so we are working with Arts Council of Wales to evolve and develop the Sprint model for the next phase of HARP, to be delivered from October 2020. Additional focus will be needed in future iterations on scale, sustainability and project evaluation, to meet the system change ambitions of a people powered approach.



Sample of art works from the Sprint projects



Joseph Powell-Main, still from "Ddraig" dance performance, from Conversations / Future Selves



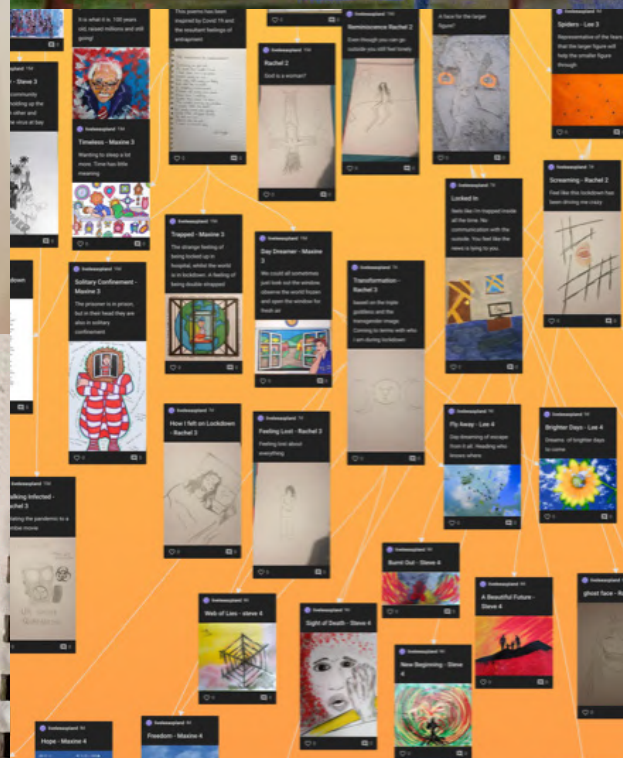
Lee Aspland, initial 'Rengarific' artwork



"Separation through Lockdown" - Lucy, Rengarific participant

I left an oak seed, planted deep in the earth,
A reminder of my visit, growing strong + solid,
Nourished by the love of all nature there.
In exchange, the woodland gave me a seed,
To plant in my heart + my garden,
A flowering, peaceful tree whose branches,
waving gently in the breeze,
will calm + nourish me.

'Day 2', 15 a Day participant



Rengarific padlet, group 1 (The VC Gallery)