

OUT OF THE BLUE

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/25

hoot
creative arts



Photo credit: Helen

Being creative makes you feel good

hoot creative arts are one of the leading [Creative Health](#) charities in England and one of very few Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations to receive a significant uplift in funding for 2023–26. Based in an ACE '[Priority Place](#)', we have the opportunity to build a more robust Creative Health sector in Kirklees. We work with VCSE colleagues, Universities and other cultural sector organisations to offer varied and high-quality creative engagement and progression for participants.

Our commissioned service comprises of 2 distinct strands of activity:

Out of the Blue is for those aged 18+ living in Kirklees with a mental health condition or wanting to support their wellbeing. This programme offers a wealth of creative groups and activities plus one-to-ones with experienced Creative Support Workers.

Breathing Space offers opportunities for people living with dementia to enhance their wellbeing through creative activities including music, song-writing, singing, visual arts and movement.

Both strands facilitate progression to greater independence and resilience and support participants to live more enriched lives through their engagement with creative arts.

Find our previous reports [here on our website](#) ➡

Operating this year

In this first year of our new contract we have adjusted our delivery accordingly as we try new approaches, respond to demand and use our years of experience to hone our offer.

We delivered our core programme from our base in Huddersfield and from Howlands, a centrally based community centre in Dewsbury where during **hoot** delivery we liaise with NHS colleagues, Recovery College staff and more.

We ran new Out of Hours sessions this year, partnering with different community organisations to offer place-based sessions across Kirklees. We have seen a quick uptake of these sessions suggesting that we are meeting a need around time and location.

Social media engagement increased across all platforms except X where we see the user base for the VCSE sector declining. We have now chosen to adopt the BlueSky platform. We took part in several impactful campaigns such as [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), [Carers Week](#), [Dementia Action Week](#), [Learning Disability Week](#) and [World Mental Health Day](#). You can find **hoot** on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [BlueSky](#).



Highlights



hoot x hcmf//

With the prestigious Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival we offered online electronic improv sessions, harnessing their wide reach and attracting people from all over the world – with priority given to Kirklees residents.



CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with Huddersfield University, we developed and delivered workshops around socially engaged creative practice. Resident artists, Rob and Sally ran 2 powerful workshops demonstrating techniques and impact of working with creativity for wellbeing.

ALLOTMENT ART

We worked with Growing Works community allotment to deliver sessions from their base in Waterloo. Beautiful summer evenings in a fully accessible, multi-sensory green space lent themselves to the group using natural materials to develop wonderful artworks.



WORKING TOGETHER BETTER STAFF DAY

Rob Crisp (**hoot**) and Emily Druce (Womencentre) developed a wellbeing music workshop that staff enjoyed so much they requested time to perform it to other attendees on the day.



STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

As well as the Staff Day and World Mental Health Day we delivered workshops at an Art Walk in Greenhead Park for Carers Week and a printing session for International Womens Day at the Mission. Behind the scenes the presence of 2 Working Together Better dedicated staff, a new Communications subgroup and the continuing Operations and Strategic meetings have fortified and guided the direction of all partnership activity.



BBC RADIO LEEDS...TWICE!

Our artist Rob featured on BBC Radio Leeds in August raising awareness of **hoot** and promoting our evening Campfire Songs sessions. BBC Radio Leeds then visited **hoot** in the Autumn to create a fantastic prerecorded piece about **hoot** and our work.

The year in creativity

Artforms delivered this year include: recording techniques, samples, synth recordings, folk songs, African songs, 3D art landscapes, willow sculptures, light up lanterns, online music improvisation, prose writing, samba drumming, percussion composition, singing with bouzouki, harmony singing, soft sculpting, landscape painting, silk painting, poetic fairytales, bookbinding, weaving, bamboo-tambo, accapella singing, mosaics, storytelling, natural dyemaking, songwriting, computer game music design, wet felting, haikus, fiction writing.

Listen at: hootsoundmove.bandcamp.com

We have been privileged to work with a diverse network of guest artists including: Eddie Dobson, Sophie Russell (Yorkshire Sound Women Network), Lianna Woodward, Rose Condo, Winston Plowes, Jess Baker, Maggie O Keefe, David Insua-Cao, Dave Jordan, Tom Hawkins, Sam Hodgson, Musarat Raza, Sammy Weaver, Vic Cruz, James Mabbett, Will Fletcher, Morgan Thomas, Ali Bullivent, Marianne Matusz plus our highly experienced resident artists Rob Crisp and Sally Barker.

New Times, New Places

Projects in their infancy can start slow but our new Out of Hours sessions gathered momentum quickly. In partnership with Kirklees Libraries we offered Saturday morning sessions in Almondbury, Dewsbury and Cleckheaton libraries. Singing sessions at Cleckheaton library attracted 21 people with feedback suggesting that various factors made the session attractive: the artform, the time slot, the library itself and also running in the community which, for many, opens up access and is a deal breaker around attending.

“ Really excellent session – just what I needed to pick me up after a tough week. Great group and lots of learning – plus just good to join in. ”

Weekday evening sessions included songwriting, lantern making, campfire songs, allotment art and harmony singing across different venues including Growing Works community allotment, TEN Queen Street at the Lawrence Batley Theatre and our partner S2R's Huddersfield base. Each venue had a unique appeal and the turnout for these groups was healthy.

We also piloted evening online groups in winter for those who find it challenging at this time of year. Artists Musarat Raza and Sally Barker ran visual art sessions and we partnered with [hcmf//](https://hcmf.org.uk) to deliver electronic music-making sessions.

Feedback for these new sessions is overwhelmingly positive with many participants asking for repeat sessions at the same location! As we move forward we will build on this success whilst still exploring opportunities for new locations and audiences.



The numbers

320 people accessed
Out of the Blue

374 in-person sessions
delivered



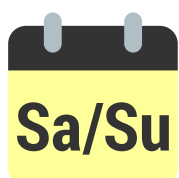
11074
hours of
contacts



232
referrals to
service

11 outreach events

11 awareness raising events



21
weekend
sessions



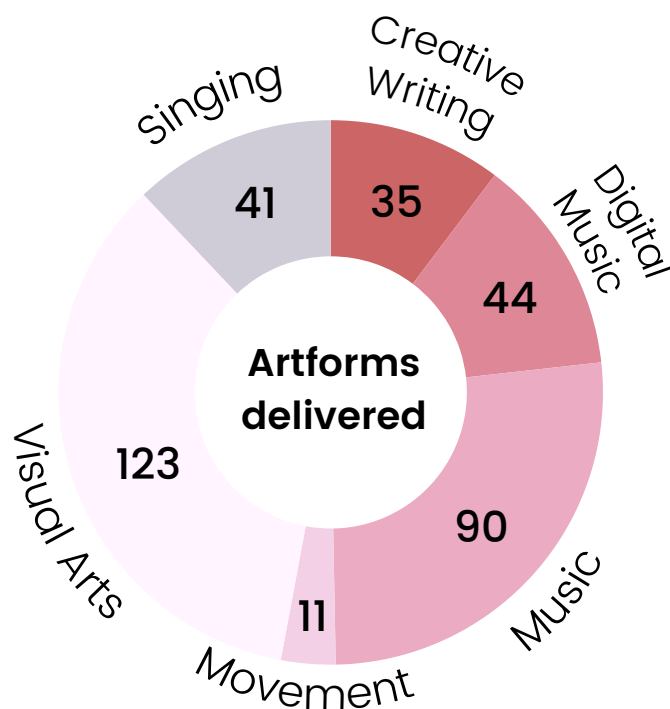
54
evening
sessions



54
welcome
sessions

49 Creative Arts Plans

6 volunteer trainings



“ I always feel so much better physically and emotionally when I attend – it's been a difficult time for me recently but coming to **hoot** really helps. ”
Out of the Blue participant

hoot from home



30 people accessed
hoot from home

238 hours spent online

788 hours being creative offline



86
comments
and replies



145
posts to
the site

Outcomes



External evaluator ([Luminaire Consultancy](#)) has analysed the annual Key Performance Indicators (KPI) survey, Creative Arts Plan (CAP) results, participant feedback and other informal discussions to consider evidence indicative of change across the frameworks referenced in the service specification including: 6 Ways to Wellbeing used in the CAPS; Outcome goals (section 5.2) and KPIs (section 11) outlined in the service specification (section 5.2); Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Strategy (KHWS) 2022-2027 and West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership 'I' statements.

These differing frameworks have been drawn together under 4 outcome themes.



1. Overall health and wellbeing

Demonstrated by CAP: Be Active, Be Creative, Keep Learning, Give, Take Notice; KPI1; Service Spec: health, wellbeing, resilience; KHWS Mental Wellbeing, I Statements: support, keeping active, wellbeing.

99% of the KPI survey respondents said that they feel their health and wellbeing has improved because of attending **hoot** activities. The overall improvement in CAP scores across the Ways to Wellbeing is further evidence of this. The CAP tool supports people to identify and set goals in the key areas to enable them to have the skills to improve their health and wellbeing. Being creative, having a sense of purpose and taking a break from life challenges were all described as important.

"The singing and the art activities are so uplifting I actually feel productive whilst I'm here and encourages me to do more when I leave."

"hoot is my escapism from troubles and pain and is a reason for me to leave the house once a week"

"Creativity, using imagination helps reduce negative feelings and ideas."

2. Social connection and community

Demonstrated by CAP: Connect; KPI 5; Service Spec: loneliness and isolation; KHWS: loneliness and inclusion; I statements on community and connection.

In the KPI survey, most people (91%) feel that being a part of **hoot** helps them to be a part of the community and to reduce social isolation with many conversations during CAPs and in groups to evidence this.



"I feel like I belong."

"Me and my wife enjoy everything and everyone's friendship that is the brilliant staff and our wonderful friends who are like family to us what a wonderful precious bunch of people."

3. Self-management of health and wellbeing

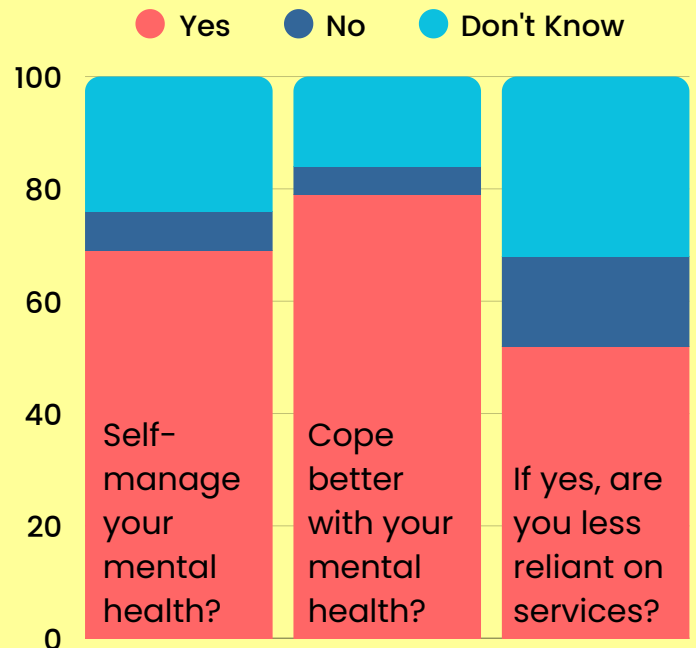


Demonstrated by CAP: Keep Learning, Give, Be Active; KPIs 2, 3 and 4, Service spec: maximising control and reducing need for services; KHWS and I statements: outcomes on Independence

An important step towards self-management is supporting people to develop the skills to make independent decisions about their health and wellbeing. This is reflected in the role of the service to work together with people to identify social and vocational outcomes as cited in the Service Specification.

It is achieved by the approach of **hoot** staff during CAP reviews and informal conversations as evidenced in KPI 3 (90% said they felt fully involved in choosing their activities and support at **hoot**) and in the KPI 4 graph to the right.

By coming to **hoot** activities do you feel that you can...



"Being in a safe space where I can be around other people"

"Safe space to be as creative and as silly as you like - there's no "wrong" answer."

4. Employment, volunteering and further education

Demonstrated by CAP: Be Creative, Give, Keep Learning; KPI: none directly related; Service Spec: maximising social functioning, recovery, hope, employment, social and vocational outcomes; KHWS: purpose and fulfilment.



hoot's work is strongly supportive of people learning new skills, growing in confidence and making connections as evidenced previously. Based on participants' reports we know that, often, these positive changes lead to a proportion of people going on to find employment, higher or vocational education or volunteering.

"I have now started working part time and working towards [being] discharged from [my] CPN. Without hoot's creative writing I would not have progressed as well and quickly in coping with my anxiety so would not be in this situation."

"[I am] volunteering at the library (with children) and REST Stop in Batley."

"Starting course Level 1 hairdressing"

Co-production



Creative sessions have co-production at their heart: sessions are built around the skills in the room and choosing, developing and running sessions is a 2-way process between participants and artists and staff. Participants are actively encouraged to shape each activity with staff ready to facilitate suggestions.

The activity space has a Comments Box: all feedback is passed on to relevant team members for session planning. In addition, each year we review all participant suggestions to produce "You Said, We Listened" highlighting action taken as a direct result of comments.

hoot groups foster a culture of peer support: artists and staff ensure their approach is around facilitating not dominating and this enables participants to share creative techniques and ideas as well as emotional and practical support. During the Creative Arts Plan conversation staff reflect these actions back to individuals to build confidence and highlight the value they bring.

Volunteers play a unique role in linking participants and staff. They can feedback at anytime through direct contact with their supervisor and through quarterly group meetings, 6-monthly 1:1 conversations, post-session debriefs and a robust Volunteer Exit Interview for those leaving their role.

The Working Together Better Partnership Co-Production audit usefully highlights areas of success but also key areas for learning going forward.



Case Study



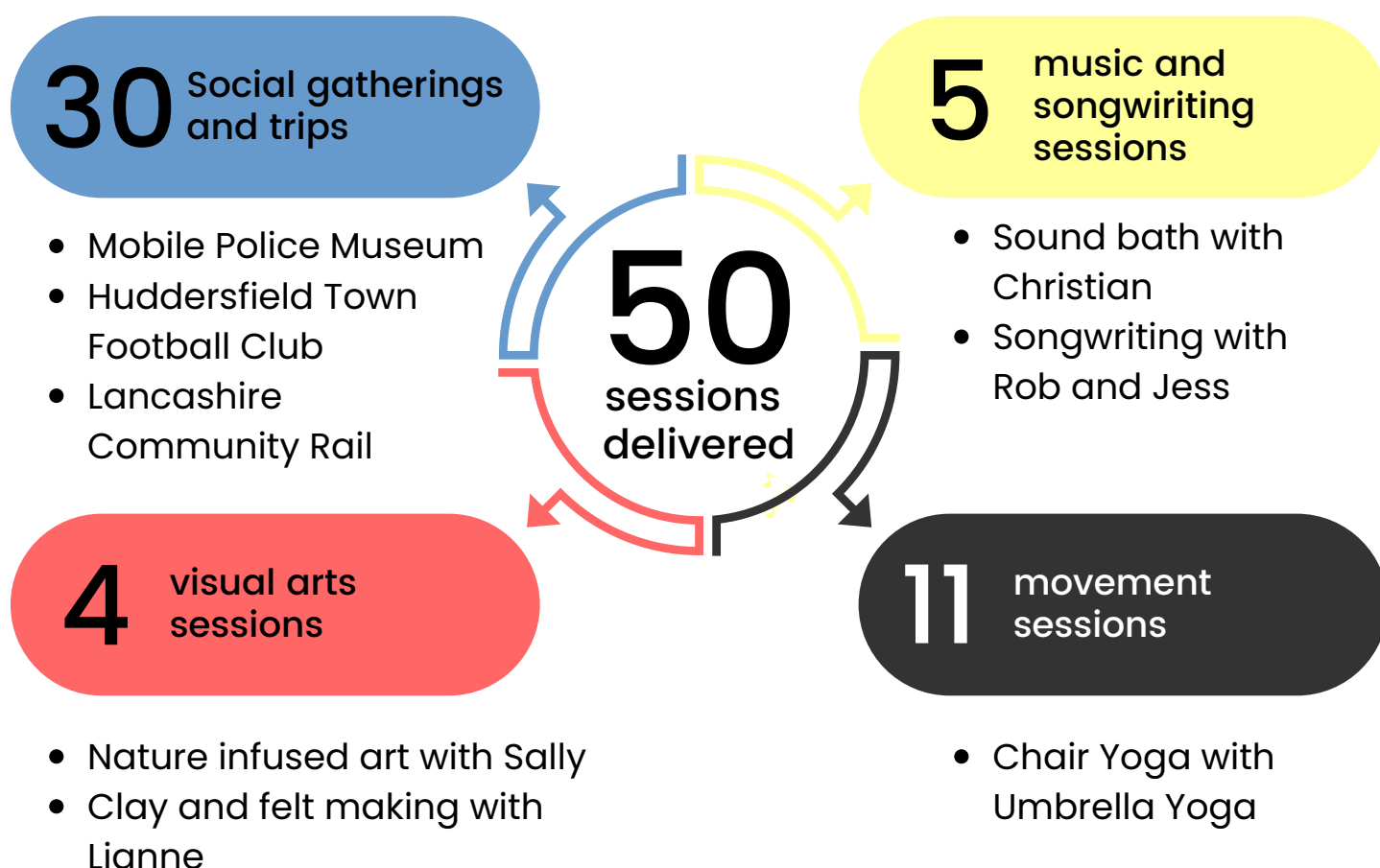
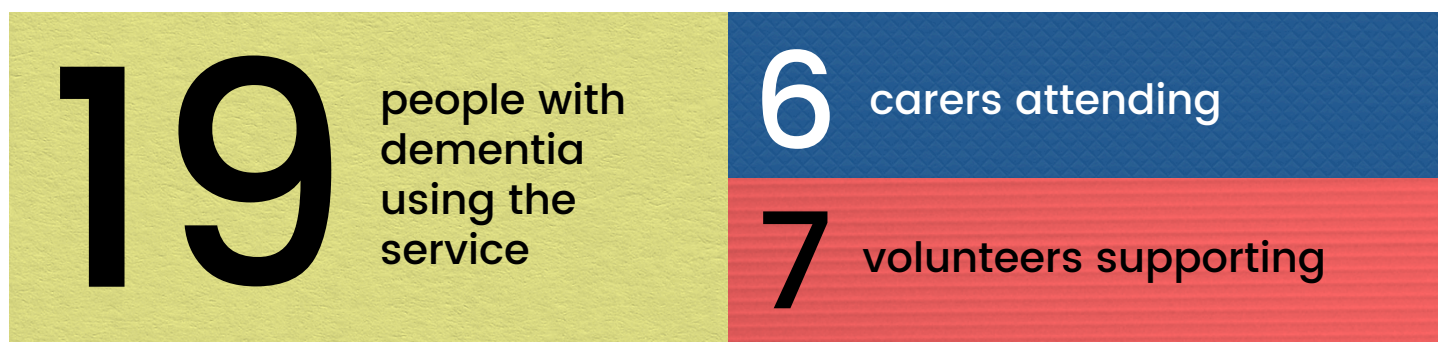
Keith joined **hoot** in August 2024 and now regularly attends Visual Art sessions as well as occasional weekend offers.

"I hadn't done much art prior to coming to **hoot** as I used to work in marketing. I've found it really liberating to have freedom in creativity: experimenting in art and problem-solving my way through. The process has helped me to reduce my perfectionist approach to everything and I am contemplating a career change because of it. [without hoot] I doubt that I'd have got back into art in the way I have, having not done much in years because of the way I was criticised at school."

Keith came to **hoot** to try out something new and found the impact life changing: it has been fundamental in boosting health and wellbeing, encouraging self-management of health, and encouraging self-directed learning as well as possible career change.

Breathing Space: Thursday Group

hoot continued its partnership with Kirklees Dementia Hub (KDH) for the young onset dementia group. The group meets on a Thursday afternoon at Brian Jackson House, Huddersfield. Both partners co-created a year-long program with trips, visual arts, music, and movement sessions as well as social gatherings.



“ We are always improving the way that we work with people with dementia. We know balance is problematic, so this time we did some leg strength movements (e.g. standing and hovering above the chair). ”

Ellie, Umbrella Yoga

At the songwriting sessions with Jess, the group thought of words to summarise the feel and intentions of the group, or that could even be used as a motto.



Join our party
Spread the word
Grow together
Your voice is heard

The volunteers are well embedded and fully know and understand the needs of each individual group member. Some of the participants also help by setting up, making refreshments and supporting their peers with the activity or seating.

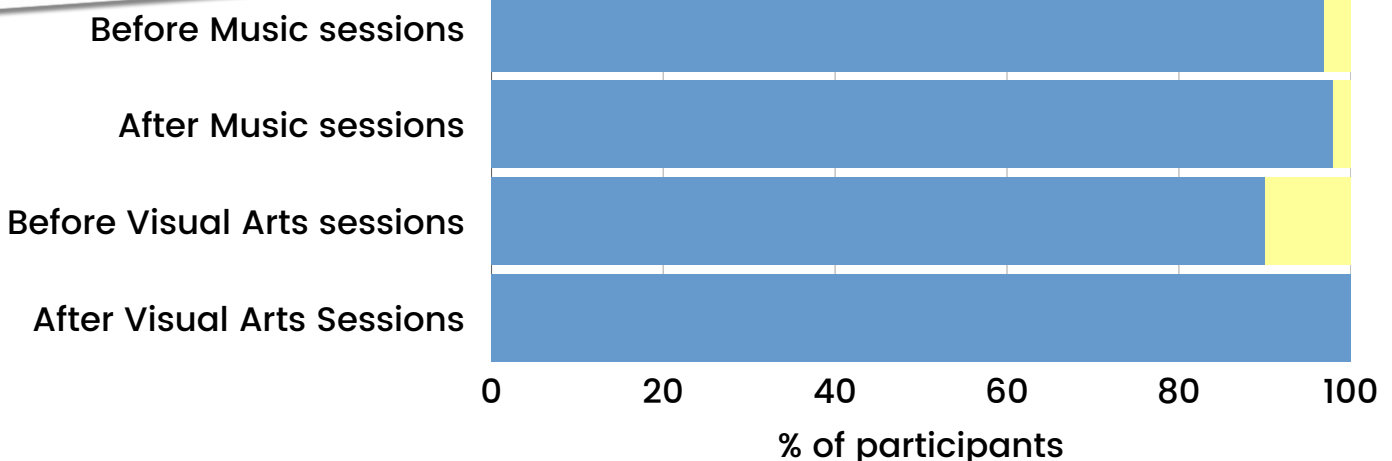
Although there are many unpredictable factors for the members of the Thursday Group, one thing the group can always rely on is the warm welcome amongst friends and lots of smiles as they have fun together. The group is very valuable for social connection, peer support, friendship, mental health and well-being that all supports brain function and dexterity.

Impact 😊

hoot devised a 'How's it going?' poster to help us prompt an accessible evaluation. The poster uses a simple smiley and thumbs up/down traffic light system. At the beginning of the session, we check-in as to how we are feeling and tally the thumbs and we check-in at the end with a tally which helps us track how the session went, and that people are feeling more positive.



● Good ● So-so ● Not Good



Working Together Better Partnership

In 2024/25 we continued to play an active role in the Working Together Better Partnership (WTBP), a Kirklees group of seven local mental health charities. Together, we offer open and friendly support for adults to help them find their way to better mental wellbeing by boosting their confidence, building resilience and making connections.

Across the partnership we provide:

- Creative activities
- Nature based and wellbeing activities
- Information and support
- Advocacy
- Employment and peer support
- Counselling
- Groups using therapy approaches

Two central team members joined the partnership this year, one focusing on strategy and one on diversity and community engagement.

They've helped us drive forward big goals like shared communications and participation, developing a new neurodiversity project and beginning our Theory of Change as part of evaluating how we work together.

Our comms group has been busy supporting these events. They have also developed a new website and a tagline so it's easier for people to access the right support no matter which partner they come through.

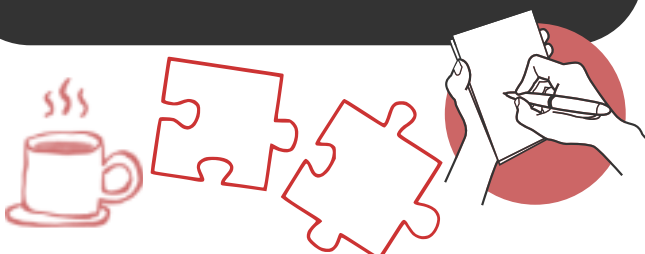
This year, we've deepened our partnership, brought in new people, built trust, and started to shape a shared identity that values each partner and our joint work.

We collaborated across four groups:

- Steering Group for setting direction
- Operations Group for projects and practice
- Comms Group for our shared voice
- Neurodiversity Group for developing ideas to better support neurodivergent people in our teams and communities.

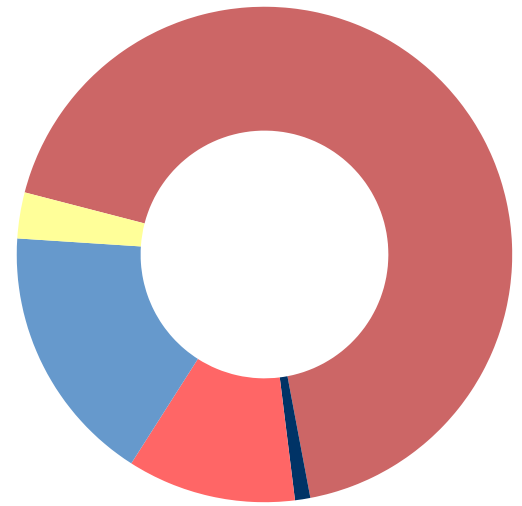
We also co-designed and co-facilitated successful community events:

- A WTBP Partnership Day for staff across the partnership to connect and learn,
- A wellbeing fair for World Mental Health Day in Dewsbury,
- Our first Volunteer Celebration event, and
- A lively and buzzing International Women's Day gathering with wellness activities and workshops.



Finance

Staffing costs (inc in house artists, other salaries & management)	68%
Overheads/General Running Costs	3%
Project costs (includes materials, equipment, Artists fees etc.)	17%
Premises (rates, rent, maintenance)	11%
Other staffing costs (travel, external supervision, training)	1%



Kirklees Council	£178,600.16
NHS CCG/ICSSs	£27,144.00
Total income available	£205,744.16

Visions

Strengthening the partnership with Kirklees Libraries

After a very successful pilot year, both Kirklees Libraries and **hoot** wish to strengthen this partnership and continue working closely together. We are keen to try new library venues, new times and develop publicity and promotional materials together.

Linking with cultural offers




The benefits of cultural engagement and a feeling of community are significant so as much as possible we will facilitate and promote local cultural offers to people attending the Out of the Blue service.

Piloting new Outcomes tools

We are piloting new Outcomes tools this year to develop a holistic picture of participants' wellbeing whilst identifying the benefits that engagement in creativity can offer. The new tools will include creative and personal goal setting to identify the outcomes individuals wish to achieve.

Out of the Blue & Breathing Space are funded by



   **hoot creative arts**
Bates Mill, Milford Street, Huddersfield, HD1 3DX
01484 516224 | www.hootcreativearts.co.uk

Registered Charity 1146358
Company No 07980273



Supported by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND