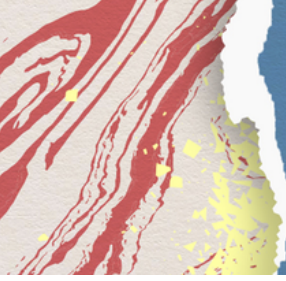


OUT OF THE BLUE
ANNUAL REPORT
2025/26



The Blue Denim Jacket project by Visual Arts group, Dewsbury.
Featuring Darren, Tilly and Linda – group participants.



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 the second year of the current 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.

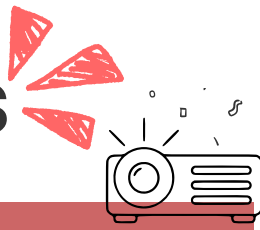
We continue to deliver our core programme from our base in Huddersfield and Howlands centre in Dewsbury. Howlands is a central community centre in Dewsbury and a good home for the **hoot** offer.

Our Out of Hours offer has settled into more of a rhythm this year: our Saturday sessions have a solid presence in North Kirklees libraries with new people attending who can't always access **hoot** services through working hours. Sessions in the evening have fluctuated in terms of attendance so we continue to review and refine the offer.

Social media followers and engagement continued to increase across all platforms. Following a trial of BlueSky we decided to invest efforts in other platforms including LinkedIn and a **hoot** WhatsApp channel. We covered several impactful campaigns such as International Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, Carers Week, Dementia Action Week, Volunteers Week, International Artists Day and World Mental Health Day.



Highlights



Heritage Quay Exhibition

Huddersfield Visual art participants enjoyed an afternoon at Heritage Quay seeing their Leonard-Baskin inspired images projected onto the big curvy screen to friends and family who were invited to this



Oakwell Hall Showcase

The Blue Denim Jacket went on display at Oakwell Hall with a display board and QR code for people to find out more. Participants and staff visited the exhibition and were proud to see their work displayed in such a beautiful setting



Annual partnership events

Hoot ran a songwriting workshop at the Carers Day event; a parade decoration workshop at the Lantern Parade; a digital music session at the Volunteer Celebration and a fabric painting workshop at the International Women's Day event.



Trying something new

We delivered varied artforms across a variety of venues to ensure our offer was diverse and accessible. Locations included: the Greenwood Centre; Cleckheaton Library; The Watershed; Lawrence Batley Theatre; Growing Works allotment. New artforms included Arabic Calligraphy with Hafifa Ahmed and Rapping and beatboxing with Jack Flash.



Saturday Calligraphy Group: Work by Komal

Poetry Performances

During our Winter Warmer week we invited actors from Proper Job to read out poems and monologues written in the Creative Writing group. Filmed under spotlights in the creative space, people said how much they enjoyed seeing their work performed by professional actors.



Creative Writing Huddersfield featuring Winston (left) Proper Job Theatre, Marianne and Jonathan (right)

Cultures of Film

hoot's film with the National Centre for Creative Health was featured in the University of Huddersfield Stories in Motion exhibition. It was wonderful to be a part of this exhibition celebrating the cultural life of Kirklees.



The year in creativity

This year we delivered artforms including: sculpture; poetry; writing for drama; ukelele playing; programming drum machines; harmony singing; bouzouki; drawing; ceramics; rapping; embroidery; glass painting; mandalas; designing bags; silk painting; knitting with recycled textiles; making art from recycled paper; writing monologues; African drumming, percussion work; soundscapes; relief pictures and Arabic calligraphy.

We have been privileged to work with a diverse network of guest artists and organisations including Kim Searle, Alison Morrish, Rose Condo, Sammy Weaver, Jade Harris, Julia Roebuck, Tembre De Carteret, Musarat Raza, Helen Robinson (Fair n Funky), Katie Mallard (Valley Beats), Winston Plowes, Marianne Matusz, Vic Cruz, Hafifa Ahmed, Sam Hodgson, Jess Baker, Ali Bullivant, Jo Kennedy, Rob Bradley (aka rapper Jack Flash), Proper Job Theatre, Woven Festival and our in house artists Rob Crisp and Sally Barker.



Top: Saturday Singing Group. Middle: work by Linda T. Bottom: work by Dale, Julie and Anon

Co-production



Out of the Blue's creative sessions are co-productive, valuing participants' experiences, skills, and ideas alongside the facilitators' expertise, while fostering a supportive environment that encourages experimentation and exploration. Through Wellbeing Plans, participants can further develop their ideas and set personal goals with guidance from staff. Additionally, a new feedback system has been introduced, where comments collected via Activity Space boxes are reviewed at quarterly team meetings, enabling us to identify recurring themes, investigate specific requests, and make responsive improvements.

Through these approaches, we have co-produced a set of guidelines to allow our Singing session attendees to be able to record clips of the songs during the group in a way that keeps everyone safe and maintains the flow of the session.

Our Music group told us that they wanted to experiment more with different music genres and music from other countries. In response, we programmed in both Brazilian Samba and West-African drumming for 12 weeks.

During Summer 2025 we consulted with the Visual Arts groups to explore what artists, inspiration or creative techniques they'd like to try. Our freelance artists presented 3 potential session briefs and groups voted on our preference which was then timetabled into the programme.

“ The environment is always welcoming.
[I enjoy] the ability for freedom with your art
and that you can do your own thing. Staff are
always extremely helpful and friendly. ”

The numbers

391 people accessed
Out of the Blue

406 in-person sessions
delivered



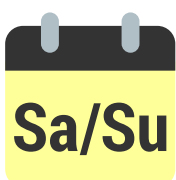
8114
hours of
contacts



146
referrals to
service

12 outreach events

14 awareness raising events



29
weekend
sessions



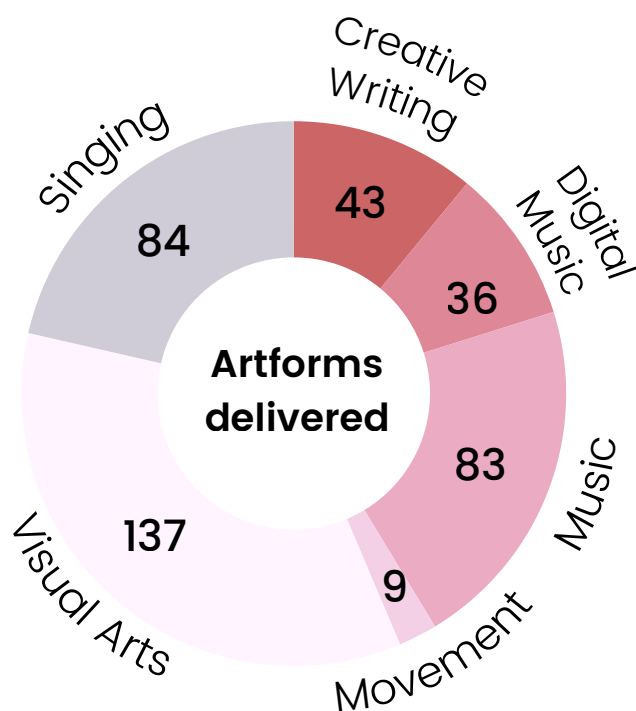
74
evening
sessions



64
welcome
sessions

49 Wellbeing Plans

16 Big Nights Out



“ **hoot** has a nice creative community, that I feel a part of. When I come to **hoot** I leave feeling better then when I came. *Out of the Blue participant* ”

hoot from home



27 people accessed
hoot from home

441 hours spent online

991 hours being creative offline



68
comments
and replies



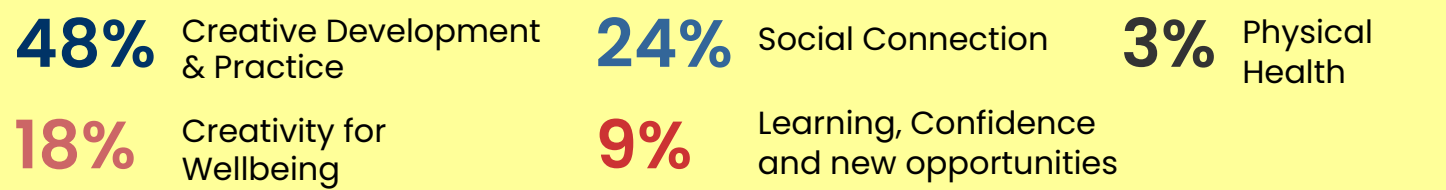
212
posts to
the site

Outcomes

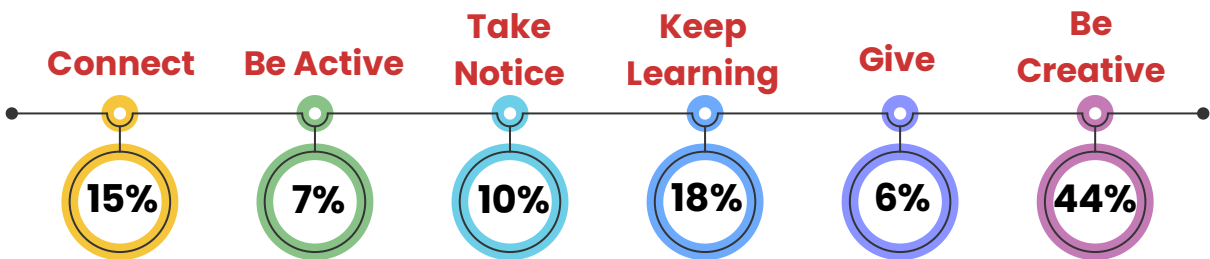
We used a variety of evaluation tools to measure service satisfaction and impact plus encourage goal setting and reflection. **Hoot** takes an outcome-focused approach and our diverse tools have been designed to be broad enough to pick up evidence indicative of change across the frameworks referenced in the service specification including: 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.

Goal Setting

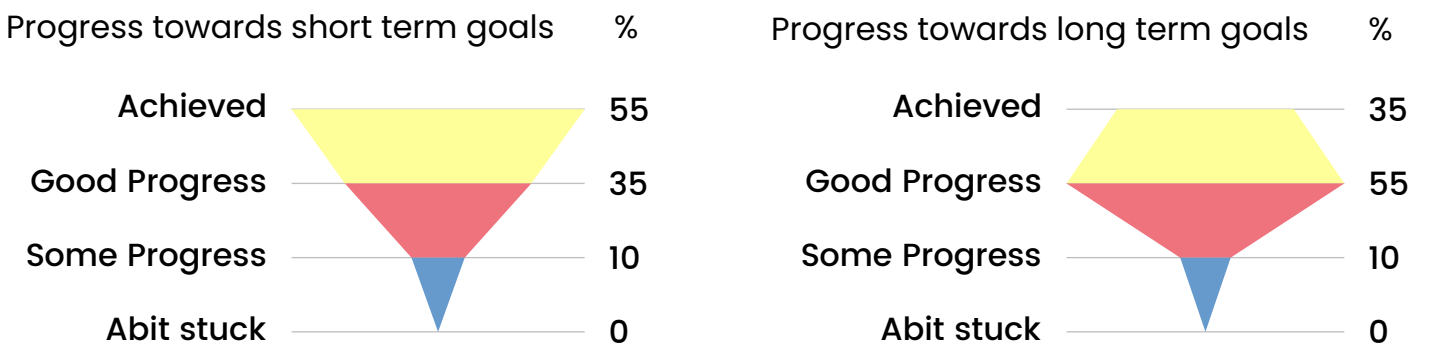
We launched the Wellbeing Plan this year across the programme. Participants sit down one to one with a Creative Support Worker and reflect on goals they would like to achieve and what support might help them get there. Over the year, people set goals across a range of areas with common themes emerging:



The Creative Goals set mapped strongly onto the 6 Ways to Wellbeing (5 + Be Creative):



Wellbeing Plans are revisited every 6 months to track progress towards participants' long and short term goals, and see what they would like to do next. Across the board, people were making progress towards their goals and our Creative Support Workers reported how positive it can be for people to recognise this.



Some of the goals set involved looking outwards, for example visiting a stately home and herb garden. The participant had moved towards this by checking bus times. Somebody else was keen to visit Salts Mill to see the Hockney exhibition and had moved closer towards this by securing a companion to go with and making a plan to go when the weather is warmer.

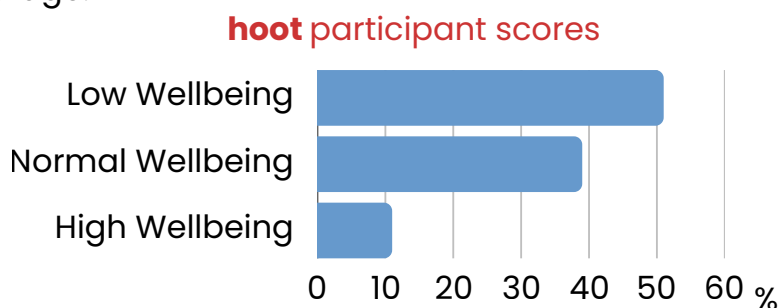


Impact on Wellbeing – SWEMWBS

We also used the SWEMWBS questionnaire – developed by experts in medicine, health and social care to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population. It is a statistically validated tool that gives a relatively objective measure of wellbeing and results can be compared to national averages.

Participants respond every 3 months and the annual results show that – as we might expect of a mental health organisation – people attending **hoot** had an overall wellbeing score slightly lower than the national average.

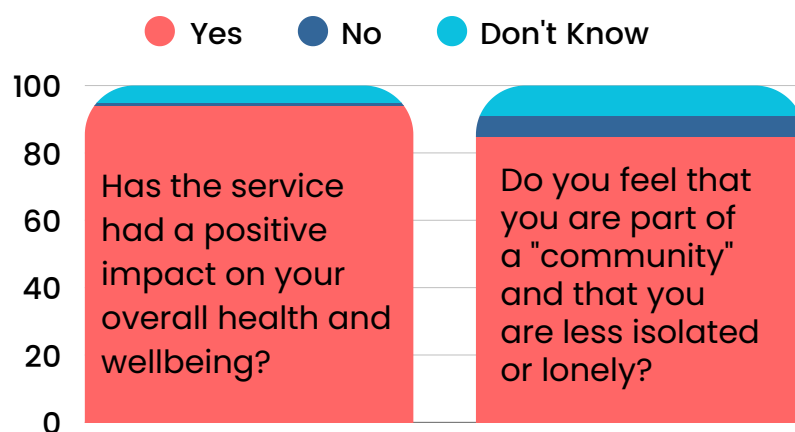
The average wellbeing score (on a scale between 7 and 35, 35 being high wellbeing) at **hoot** was 20.8 with the national average score being 23.5.



Service satisfaction and influence on wellbeing – KPIs

KPI questions (Point 11.8) are people self-reporting the impact of the **hoot** service while SWEMWBS give an overall objective measure of a person's wellbeing.

Even in the face of overall lower wellbeing than the national average people still report that the impact of **hoot** is substantial.



In conclusion, the data shows that the service is making a clear positive difference. People are setting meaningful goals—mainly around creativity, social connection, and learning—and most are making good progress towards them.



While wellbeing scores are slightly below the national average, which reflects the needs of the group, nearly all participants say the service has improved their wellbeing and helped them feel less isolated. This suggests **hoot** is providing valuable support that helps people move forward and feel more connected.

Volunteering

This year we welcomed new volunteers and said goodbye to others who progressed into paid work in the care sector, studies in counselling, music projects and teaching abroad. We are pleased to have been a part of people's professional and creative journeys.

We marked an incredible milestone for volunteer Helen who has volunteered with **hoot** for 10 years. Helen received a personalised message from the Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team with a token of appreciation for such commitment to her role.



We partnered with Waythrough to host the Working Together Better Volunteer & Peer Champion Thank You Event. This was a wonderful way to come together and thank all the volunteers from partnership services.



Finally, we were thrilled to achieve the Kirklees Volunteer Quality Award which is recognised across Yorkshire. It is managed and assessed by a partnership between TSL Kirklees Volunteering, Kirklees Council and the TSL Kirklees Volunteer Managers Network. The certificate is awarded to organisations to show that they value their volunteers and offer a high-quality volunteering experience.



Case Study: participation to progression

Ben joined **hoot** in 2019 as a participant and quickly moved to a volunteer Role. These are excerpts from Ben's story, [click here to read more](#).

"I joined **hoot** because I wanted to explore arts and wellbeing in Kirklees, as well as share some of my pre-existing experience as a musician.

hoot helped develop my confidence, listening skills, and empathy towards others. It also helped me understand workshop dynamics and how to support group participation in an inclusive way, including safeguarding and being mindful of others' wellbeing. When you're in the session and writing, singing, or playing, it's incredibly rewarding to hear everyone's ideas. There's such a strong sense of community, and it can be really moving hearing other people's ideas develop and take shape.

I find volunteering really important for my mental wellbeing. The confidence I found at **hoot** has only grown, which has helped me as a musician. The skills and empathy I developed through group participation and collaboration have been important foundations to draw upon when working professionally, especially in songwriting sessions.

Since I left **hoot**, I started volunteering at an animal rescue in my spare time, as well as working freelance creating music library content."

Breathing Space: Thursday Group

Our partnership with Kirklees Dementia Hub's Thursday Young Onset Dementia Group continued with **hoot** providing regular creative activities in their programme of events.

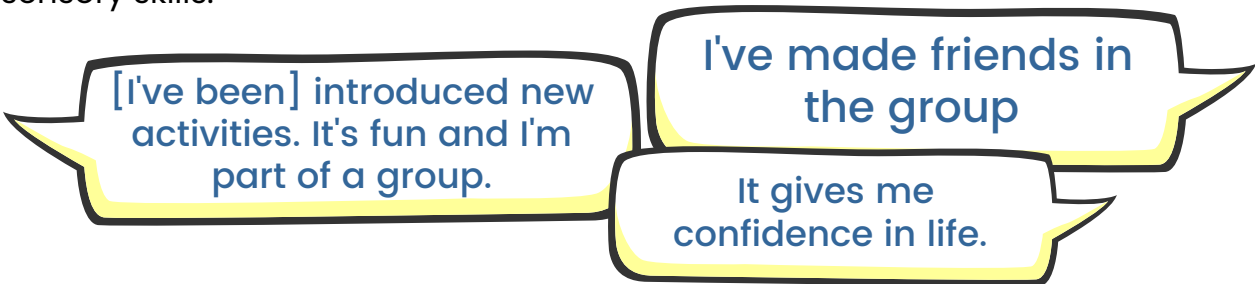
We provided monthly chair yoga sessions in partnership with local CIC Umbrella Yoga and participants enjoy stretching and relaxing. Visual artists Marina Poppa, Annie Beech and Leanne Woodward provided sessions making collaged cards, autumn wreaths, embossed wooden decorations and paper coil bowls.

The group unveiled a stunning felt wall-hanging, which was a culmination of all their work from the previous year of sessions. Members of the group expressed pride in seeing their collaborative work assembled into one piece.



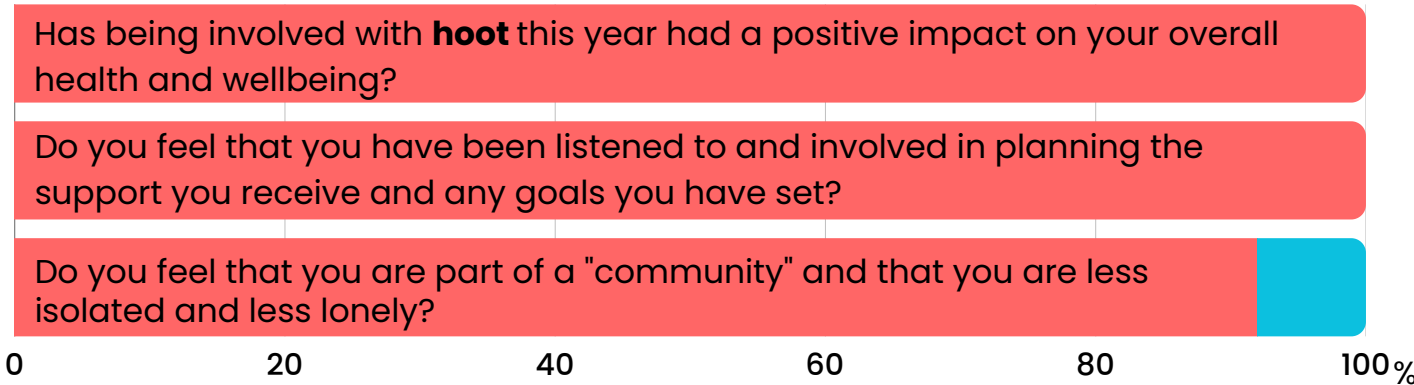
The group also worked on a music project with **hoot** in house musician Rob Crisp, exploring songwriting, music technology and playing ukeleles. They wrote and recorded their own song which is due to be mixed and released onto **hoot**'s Bandcamp site.

Feedback from each session is consistently positive with participants enjoying the variety of activities, the **hoot** approach and challenge of testing and developing their memory and sensory skills.



This year we adapted the KPIs to ask the questions that were most relevant to those with early onset dementia attending the **hoot** groups. We made sure to offer this information in writing and verbally and the results were very positive.

● Yes ● No ● Don't Know



Working Together Better Partnership

Across 2025/26 we continued to be very committed to partnership working across Kirklees, especially as part of the Working Together Better Partnership where we come together with seven community mental health charities to help adults in Kirklees find their way to better mental wellbeing.

Each charity brings its own strengths – including creative and nature-based activities, employment and peer support, advocacy, information and advice, counselling and therapeutic groups. By working together, we can offer people a wide range of support and make sure help feels joined-up and complimentary.

Much of this work happens behind the scenes. Partners meet regularly to share learning, plan projects, develop joint communications and agree priorities. We also share expertise – for example around neurodiversity – so that everyone across the partnership can offer the best possible support.

During 2025/26, Working Together Better:

- Developed a shared “Theory of Change”, setting out the impact we want to have on mental health in Kirklees and how we will achieve it together
- Listened to local people through community consultation to understand what matters most to them about mental health and wellbeing
- Set up a simple internal referral system, so people can move between partners smoothly (with consent) and get the right support at the right time
- Created a Participation Strategy to ensure lived experience shapes all our work

We also delivered four much-loved community events:

- A vibrant and intimate International Women’s Day celebration in Dewsbury with creative and wellbeing workshops
- A summer event at Crow Nest Park for Carers Week and The Great Get Together with information stalls, games, Tai Chi and music-making
- The return of the Lantern Parade to Crow Nest Park for World Mental Health Day
- A Volunteer and Peer Champion celebration in December, thanking those who make our work possible



Finance

Staffing costs (inc in house artists, other salaries & management)

70%

Overheads/General Running Costs

4%

Project costs (includes materials, equipment, Artists fees etc.)

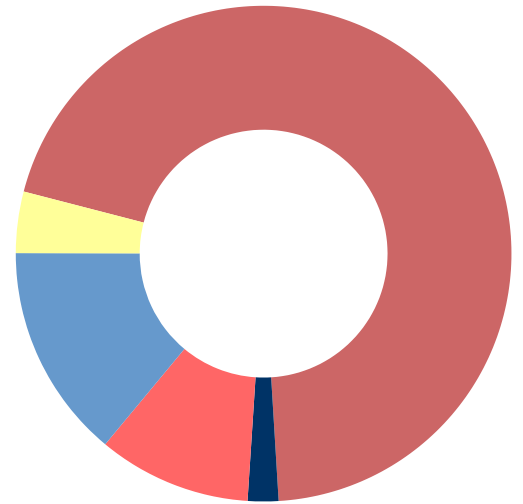
14%

Premises (rates, rent, maintenance)

10%

Other staffing costs (travel, external supervision, training)

2%



Kirklees Council	£189,315.99
NHS CCG/ICSSs	£27,912.48
Total income available	£217,228.47

Visions

Expanding the ways in which we showcase participants work

Taking a creative approach to the different platforms and opportunities where participants could show their work publicly and in closed events. Options could include social media, public or private showcase events, community venues and conferences.

Developing strong relationships and delivering in partnership

Continuing with a strong WTB approach for shared events and relationships as well as other partners in the community such as Kirklees Libraries, Community Connectors, The Arcade Dewsbury, Culture Collective and the Creative Health Hub at University of Huddersfield.

Fortified delivery out of hours and in place based settings to reach new participants/communities

Using the intelligence of the last 2 years of delivery to cement our place-based offers across Kirklees within our evening and weekend sessions. Develop links with new cohort of Community Anchors and explore other Community Anchor & hyper local place based work funding.

Evaluation & Evidence of Impact

Wellbeing Plans and the accompanying outcomes for individuals will clearly show how this service makes a concrete difference to the lives of Kirklees residents over time and offer value for money for Council commissioners who can be provided with the data to advocate for continued support for creative mental health service delivery.

Out of the Blue & Breathing Space are funded by



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