

Being creative makes you feel good

Art by David Slater

hoot creative arts

OUT OF THE BLUE Quarterly Report

QUARTER 2 / JUL - SEPT 2026

Introduction

hoot creative arts runs the Adult Mental Health and Creativity service for Kirklees residents. This is a free service for adults aged 18 or over to help to look after their health and wellbeing which is funded by Kirklees Council and the NHS.

Find out more and read other reports at www.hootcreativearts.co.uk

Highlights



Summer allotments

We spent balmy summer evenings playing music, singing and painting with natural inks at the Growing Works allotment in Dalton. Participants told us that they enjoyed switching off and being creative outdoors.

12-track original album

A digital music participant completed their own album of 12 original music tracks which we published on **hoot**'s Bandcamp. Why not listen whilst you read through this report? Listen here



Neurodiversity Training

Hosted by **hoot**, a trainer from our partner organisation delivered an all-staff neurodiversity session grounded in lived experience. The training clarified key terms, raised awareness and provided practical, everyday ways to try to create a more neuroinclusive environment across our team and projects.

New project manager

We successfully recruited a new Project Manager for the commissioned service who is due to start in Quarter 3.

> **hoot** Is so important in my life. I love the Creative Writing and the craft and singing that we did in the past. It is nice to be a part of the community, it brings me into the real world. It is very difficult being bed-bound with no energy at all to get up. It stimulates my brain. Even living with my family I can still feel isolated and **hoot** gives me a little more involvement and something to engage in. **hoot** is tremendously helpful.

Challenges

We said goodbye to Project Managers Kath and Tor this quarter. Whilst recruitment took place, interim project manager was put in place to ensure service continued seamlessly and the team continued to receive support.

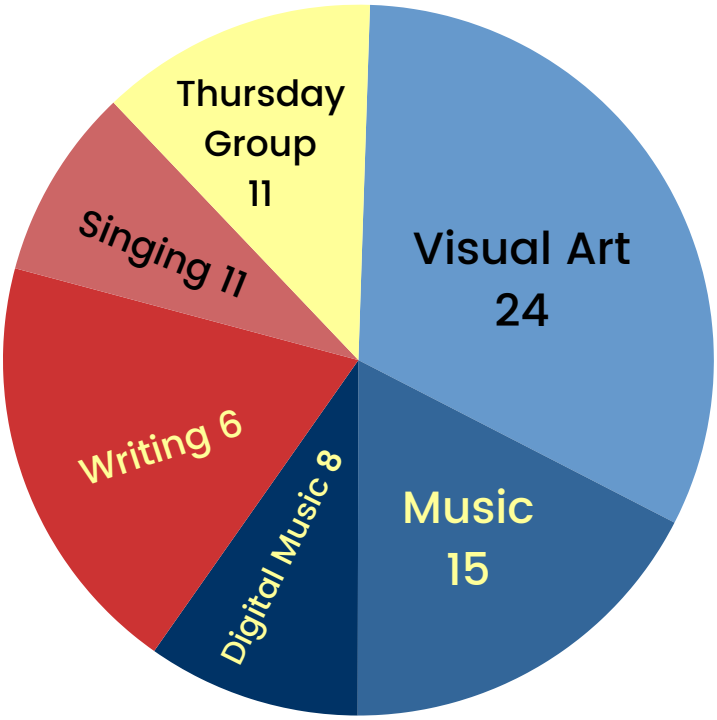
The numbers

174 people using the service

74 in-person sessions

48 referrals to sessions

31 individuals at WELCOME! sessions



4 weekend sessions in-person

4 evening sessions in-person

1818 hours of contact with participants

Online sessions

30 new posts to **hoot** from home

7 online evening creative sessions

4 hours spent offline continuing being creative
average per person

People

65 people with autism, dementia, or a disability

105 people over 35
34 people under 35

30% Male

67% Female

3% Non-binary

MUSIC

Co-produced with participants, the *Strumming and Drumming* sessions continued using ukuleles, guitars and djembes across a diverse range of styles and genres to create new songs and revisit earlier ones. At participants' request, time was also set aside to record and produce their songs.

September's *All That Jazz!* sessions introduced simple approaches to improvisation, distinctive chords and swing rhythms. Inspired by musical legends including Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock, the groups used these techniques to create their own music.

SINGING

Colleen Whyatt's *Sunshine Songs* brought a fun, summery feel to sessions, accompanied by ukulele followed in September by Jess Baker with *Autumn Singing*, using beautiful, reflective cappella harmonies inspired by the season. Both sessions offered opportunities for creative expression, shared enjoyment and connection, helping to lift spirits and promote emotional wellbeing.

VISUAL ARTS

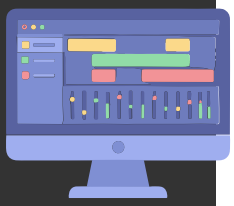
Our two Huddersfield groups finished their collaboration on a large-scale still-life artwork exploring habitats. Now displayed at **hoot**, the finished piece celebrates community and connection. Participants said that they looked forward to seeing each other's contributions, enjoying opportunities to learn new techniques and gain inspiration from others' work. In September we began mosaic-making, from contemporary artists and historic Roman techniques using glass and ceramic tesserae.

The Dewsbury group continued exploring drawing and painting from nature, developing observational skills and experimenting with different techniques. In September, a participant's suggestion inspired a project based on ceramic artist Clarice Cliff. Participants designed and painted their own plates and cups. The finished pieces will be displayed to celebrate the participants' achievements.

> "**hoot** has helped me so much, I'm in such a better place than when I started"

DIGITAL MUSIC

The *Drawing Music* theme used MIDI to explore beats, chords, melodies and different genres, enabling participants to compose original pieces. In September, participants experimented with recordings of natural sounds, using Ableton Live's effects and digital instruments to transform them into evolving musical compositions. Sessions encouraged experimentation, skill development and creative self-expression.



CREATIVE WRITING

Working with writer and theatre-maker Marianne Matusz, participants used writing techniques that encouraged reflection on the small things that bring meaning to everyday life. Sessions with Sammy Weaver explored much-loved places and imaginative poetry inspired by magical creatures. In September, Rose Condo and Sammy Weaver developed participants' poetic skills through playful responses to paintings, sensory writing and experimenting with different perspectives. These sessions encouraged imagination, fresh ways of seeing the world and opportunities to express personal experiences through writing.



In the Online Creative Writing evening sessions, *Writing Poems Inspired by Yorkshire*, drew inspiration from local poets and encouraged participants to explore their connection to place and develop their individual writing styles. Rose Condo noted the group's "enthusiasm and kindness", in supporting one another by reading aloud and giving encouraging feedback.

Gazing, into this window of time
through fog-smeared quadruple glazing
at kaleidoscope tinted memories of mine
mutating, distorting with every new gazing

Writing by Joe

In September, Sammy Weaver's *Writing from Life* sessions invited participants to draw on personal experiences, life journeys and their place in the world to create new stories and poems.

OUT OF HOURS

Jess Baker led *Songs of Summer* on Saturdays in Cleckheaton Library inspired by sunshine and nature. Jess highlighted the group's ability to build skills together, listen attentively, improvise and respond sensitively to one another's needs, highlighting the inclusive and collaborative environment that supports positive wellbeing.

Through summer, we ran four evening outdoor sessions at Growing Works allotment in Dalton creating a unique opportunity to enjoy the wellbeing benefits of both making art and being outdoors. *Songs for the Stars* with Rob Crisp explored Rob's a cappella Constellation Songs, inspired by the night sky, mythology and history. The group then composed their own music inspired by stars, planets and their surroundings.

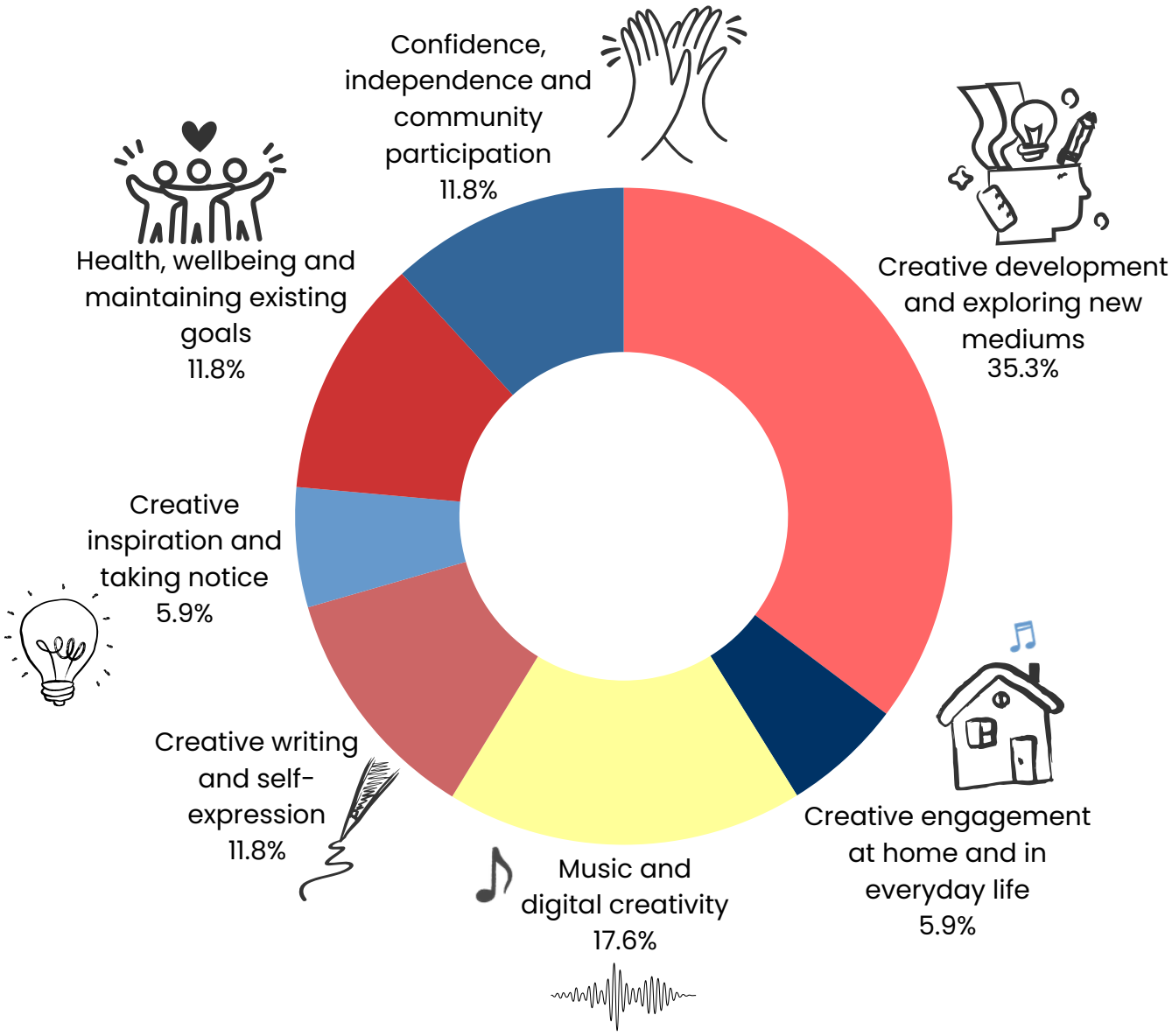
Sally Barker's *Drawing from Nature* invited participants to create artwork inspired by the surroundings. Participants experimented with natural inks and made their own drawing tools from twigs, grasses and flowers, exploring new materials and techniques.

Outcomes & Evaluation

We continue to collect a variety of data, giving solid body of information to triangulate and assess the impact of attendance at **hoot** on wellbeing.

Goal Setting: People were setting and reaching goals this quarter through their wellbeing plans – a one-to-one conversation with a Creative Support Worker.

Examples of overall main themes emerging from the creative goals included:



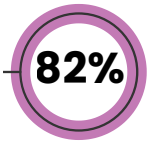
The following themes capture the ways participants are already engaging with creativity and working towards their goals. Participants may appear in more than one theme:

Theme	Examples from responses	Percentage of people
Attending groups and accessing organised activities	Attending **hoot** sessions, digital music, creative writing, a church group, soundcheck sessions and other community organisations.	41.2%
Creative activities and personal practice	Writing reviews, practicing tattoo design, colouring mandalas, doodling, reading, diamond art and colouring at home.	41.2%
Using online resources and digital tools	Exploring YouTube for techniques and music, using the internet for ideas, and using a tablet.	23.5%
Building confidence through familiar activities and places Visiting	Familiar places to build confidence and maintaining involvement in community settings.	11.8%
Social connection and community participation	Attending groups and organisations, including the church group, community music sessions, recovery activities and the women's centre.	23.5%
Barriers to creative engagement	Lack of space at home, limited time outside **hoot** and not yet starting a new skill.	23.5%

The Creative Goals set mapped strongly onto the 6 Ways to Wellbeing (5 + Be Creative) showing that Wellbeing Plans are helping participants to set goals that will help them to look after their wellbeing outside of the service.

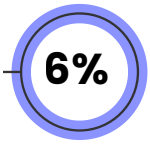
NB. As goals can relate to more than one wellbeing area, percentages do not total 100%

Be Creative



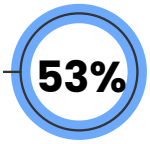
Creativity is central to participants' goals, including exploring new materials, developing artistic skills, making music, writing poetry and continuing personal projects.

Give



One participant explicitly identified inviting a friend to share a creative experience, supporting social participation.

Keep Learning



Participants expressed a desire to learn new techniques, expand their knowledge or improve existing creative skills.

Take Notice



Participants identified finding inspiration, becoming more receptive to ideas and noticing more of their surroundings.

Be Active



Participants described going out more, visiting the library and bookshops, and exploring their local area.

Connect



Goals included maintaining contact with like-minded people through creative groups and inviting a friend to explore arts and crafts.

> I've been feeling low and anxious. I've not been out of the house for 3 week. It has been a big push to get here today. I really appreciated the messages of encouragement yesterday and today. It made me feel welcome, so I came.

Moving towards goals

Wellbeing Plans provide data on people how they are steadily moving towards their goals in different ways, including attending **hoot** sessions and other organised groups, practicing skills at home, researching techniques online and exploring creative interests independently.

One participant described visiting familiar places to build confidence before exploring further. This illustrates how progress towards a creative goal may involve developing confidence and independence, as well as practicing a particular skill.

There is evidence that **hoot** sessions provide an important foundation for progress. Several responses describe activities outside facilitated sessions, including writing reviews, reading, colouring, doodling and exploring online resources. These examples show how participants are incorporating creative interests into their everyday lives, even when they are not attending **hoot**.

Short term goals

30% Achieved their goal



25% Made good progress towards their goal



30% Made some progress towards their goal

15% were a bit stuck

Long term goals

24% Made good progress towards their goal



33% Made some progress towards their goal

29% Achieved their goal



14% were a bit stuck

Overall, the goals set reflect a person-centered focus on creativity, skill development, wellbeing and future independence, with creativity acting as both a source of personal fulfilment and a potential pathway towards employment opportunities.

> **hoot** is the most enjoyable place I have been to. The staff are fantastic with us all and are always praising us on our achievments. We appreciate **hoot** more then you will realise.

We ask Key Performance Indicator (KPI) related questions quarterly. Combined results as follows:

91% feel their health and wellbeing has improved because of attending **hoot** activities.

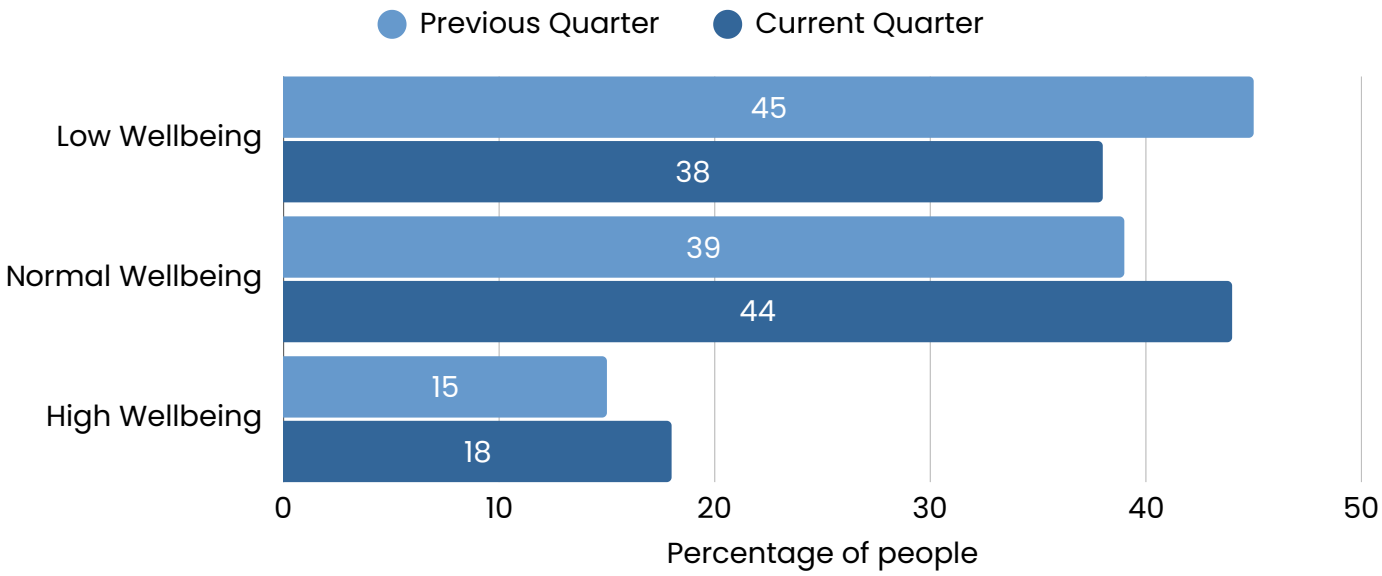
91% feel that being a part of **hoot** helps them to be a part of the community and to reduce social isolation.

82% feel informed about what support is available at **hoot** and in the Kirklees area.

85% feel that they have been listened to and involved in planning the support they receive and any goals they have set at **hoot**?

> I like trying new art forms I haven't done before, I like being able to do art here because I can struggle to give myself peemission at home as I feel guilty doing fun things when my housework is never done. It also means a lot to me to have a place I feel safe to go and be around people as I am quite isolated sometimes.

We also collected Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) data. This is a 7-item questionnaire used to measure positive mental wellbeing. The headline figures are:



This quarter, we saw a decrease in people reporting Low Wellbeing and increased Normal and High Wellbeing. The average score on the scale of 7 - 35 was 22 and the national population average is 23.

> I like experimenting, trying new things and how the projects change - it keeps me interested. I like how we do individual work and collaboration. [It] gets me out of the house and meeting people. If I want to be social I can, but if I want to be quiet, I can also do that.

Volunteering with hoot

Our 3 new Group Support Volunteers settled into their groups before the break and returned to supporting sessions with great feedback from the volunteers about their experience so far. Sadly, one volunteer's university schedule means they have had to leave their role after a short time but they told us:

> "I've really enjoyed volunteering at **hoot** over this summer. It's really brought me a lot of confidence and I loved getting back into crafting and engaging with the group. Thank you for all your support throughout this journey."

Our Graphic Design volunteer continued their work with us finishing a new set of emoji designs and working next on some new stickers to add to our collection. They are due to finish their volunteering with us next quarter.



62.5 hours
volunteering

Looking ahead, we will be recruiting new volunteers to the current openings in Dewsbury Visual Arts, Huddersfield Singing and Huddersfield Wednesdays Visual Arts groups.



25 sessions
supported

Projects that complement and add value

Creative Pathways continued to deliver creative sessions across Kirklees to people with learning disabilities at **hoot**. Out of the Blue works in a complementary parallel with this programme to ensure that people are in a group that best matches their style and independence.

In September, participants from both groups admired the large piece of work created by Out of the Blue Huddersfield Visual Arts groups and took inspiration from this to create textile work using different techniques and materials.



14 sessions



132 attendances



264 contact hours

Breathing Space / Thursday Group

The group enjoyed a varied programme of creative, social and wellbeing activities delivered by Kirklees Dementia Hub staff, volunteers and **hoot creative arts**. Social sessions provided opportunities for discussion, peer support, games and shared celebrations, strengthening social connection and a sense of community.

hoot's creative programme included chair yoga with Umbrella Yoga, circus and balloon modelling with Deborah Joy, and singing and songwriting with Marion Smith. Participants particularly enjoyed the circus activities, with balloon modelling and the "tightrope" challenge proving popular. Although not everyone attempted the tightrope, the activity created shared anticipation, encouragement and excitement, demonstrating the power of creative experiences to bring people together.

The sessions supported six aspects of engagement: invitation, exploring, connection, expression, challenge, giving and growth. Feedback highlighted meaningful individual benefits: one participant was delighted to try balloon modelling after previously requesting it, another said the session had "brightened their day", and a participant who usually struggled with balance and co-ordination volunteered for a balance-based challenge and performed very well.

> "I feel more confident meeting new people and everyone taking part in the activities."

Singing and collaborative songwriting were also particularly well received, providing opportunities for creative expression and shared achievement.

Overall, feedback demonstrated that accessible, playful and thoughtfully structured creative activities can encourage participation, build confidence, support physical and emotional wellbeing, and strengthen social connections. The positive response also highlights the potential value of developing further creative sessions that combine movement, balance and co-ordination with engaging artistic activities.

> "It helps me to know that I'm not on my own - that there are other people like me."

Visions

Expanding the ways in which we showcase participants work

- Quarter 1's exhibition at Dewsbury Town Hall continued into Quarter 2 with the exhibition due to come to a close in Quarter 3.
- Based on participant feedback, the **hoot** Communications team have been developing a mechanism for participants to be able to submit their creative work for showcase on hoot's website and social media.
- Finally, planning work has begun to prepare a winter showcase video for the Creative Writing groups to perform their creative pieces. The video will also be used to promote the service and creative activities on offer with **hoot**.

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

- We continue with our offer in Kirklees Libraries and the learning over the last 2 years has led us to focus particularly on offers in North Kirklees. Ravensthorpe and Cleckheaton residents have reported that travel into Dewsbury town centre can be a barrier to access so the **hoot** offer in libraries meets a need for place-based delivery which is reflected in the attendance numbers and feedback.

Evaluation & Evidence of Impact

- We have spent time reassessing our evaluation methods and impact assessment evidence in order to maximise the case for and demonstrate the impact of attendance at **hoot** services. By gathering KPIs, SWEMWBS, Goal-setting Wellbeing Plans and general comments box feedback– we can triangulate the **hoot** experience and see the difference **hoot** can make.
- We have also trialled a new case study structure for gathering more indepth participant and volunteer stories.

Developing strong relationships with other organisations & delivering in partnership

- We continue to deliver in partnership with our Working Together Better colleagues. Many service users from partner organisations expressed interest in **hoot** which shows the value of us continually promoting our services within the partnership as well as beyond.
- Working as a Consortium Lead in the West Yorkshire Creative Health System led us to suggest that Proper Job and Third Sector Leaders host a 'Creative Health System Workshop for People with Lived Experience'. Our role as a partner in the blossoming Creative Health System should allow for effective advocacy and input from those with lived experience of mental health needs who engage with creativity.

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