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Creative Consultation: A community's views on health & wellbeing

Evaluation Report

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Content

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Introduction

The purpose of this partnership was to try a new approach to understanding the health needs of a community. The local partnership which evolved to take the project forward was comprised of representation from various agencies such as health and local authorities as well as charities. These charitable organisations either worked within the community or developed arts projects within the area but not specifically within the community in which the project was based. As the partnership evolved members took on specific roles either by contributing to the strategic planning which directed the project or by being part of delivery team responsible for producing the film. In a few cases there was overlap between the two groups. Throughout the project key members who contributed to the strategic development of the project updated those individuals at county level who were interested in how this new approach would engage the community. In the remainder of this report 'the Partnership' refers to those working at local level.

The Partnership wanted to move beyond the quantitative evidence which they traditionally had used to understand a community's health needs and an approach which particularly interested them was the use of creative consultation[1]. The use of the arts in health began over 30 years ago in treatment settings but only recently has this approach moved into the community (Putland 2008). The outcomes of other community-based arts in health projects have included improvements to the wellbeing of participants. This was of particular interest as the community upon which this project would focus was known to have a lower life expectancy compared to other people living within neighbouring areas.

Using an arts-based approach with a community is still a relatively new concept and there is only limited evidence on both the effectiveness of such an approach and what factors might enhance outcomes for participants. Mindful of this the Partnership sought to gather what evidence there was so they could make reference to this as they developed their project. Therefore, a literature review was undertaken by researchers from Bournemouth University. A common theme from the literature review was that the poor quality of current evidence made it difficult to draw comparisons between studies or to generalise the findings. Much of the evidence base relied upon small scale interventions, many of which were pilots that had not received sufficient funding to enable robust evaluation of outcomes. Therefore, the Partnership sought to address this key point by putting in place a research framework that would seek to capture both the process by which the intervention was delivered and the outcomes and associated learning that emerged from this community-based creative consultation. The following report outlines the experience

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[1] Here creative consultation is defined as using an arts activity as a vehicle for participants to engage with their community, gather views from members of the community and present these using an arts medium such as a piece of drama, a piece of art or short film.

of the partnership in delivering an arts-based community consultation on health and wellbeing within the local area.

Outline of the project

The Partnership decided to focus the project upon young people aged 11-16 years living within the community and invited them to take part in a film making project. The remit of the film was to explore what wellbeing meant to their community. The Partnership recruited and funded two film makers to work with the young people. Their role was to show the young people both how to develop their ideas but also teach them the practical skills such as how to operate a camera, conduct an interview or edit footage to create their short film. In total the film makers had five weekends to work with the young people. The project culminated with the young people arranging a fun day at which their film was shown to the local community. Invitations to join the community were also sent out to members of the Partnership and the interviewees from the film. There were several screenings of the film throughout the day and at each resident's were joined by representation from the local agencies or arts organisations to discuss their views on the film and its content.

The research process

The remit of the Research Team was to undertake a literature review initially and then evaluate the process and outcomes of the partnership and project; capturing how the project developed, the experience of those delivering the project and to identifying the elements that made the project effective. This included establishing what could be learnt to enhance future projects of a similar nature. The Research Team adopted a largely qualitative approach. This comprised:

- participant observation to follow the process surrounding the creation of the film,
- semi structured interviews[2] with those involved following the screening of the film.

Literature review summary

The evidence gained from the literature review undertaken prior to the delivery of this arts-based creative consultation had helped identify certain factors that influence the success of other arts in health projects (for a copy of the full literature review please see contact details at the end of this report). These factors are discussed in detail later in relation to the findings from this project and are as follows:

- Closely defining the focus of the project, expressed clearly in a shared language.

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[2] Some of the interviews involved multiple participants and later quotations are numbered by interview rather than individual interviewee.

- Identifying a venue that will draw in participants (comfortable, accessible and welcoming).
- Developing partnerships within the community.
- Interventions should have a long lead in time to ensure the facilitator has developed a local profile and is accepted within the community before delivering their arts in health programme.
- Facilitators should be experienced in community development as well as their arts ability.
- Matching the type of intervention to the community/participants interests.
- Ensuring the facilitator's role meets the expectations of participants.
- Professionalism of the facilitator/project leader;
- Ensuring a high quality experience for participants in terms of physical resources and the skills of the facilitator.
- Opportunities for shared leadership of activities between project facilitator and community participants.
- Having a social/health/voluntary infrastructure in place to ensure people who choose to change have the opportunity to do so at the point of readiness.

The Research Team were aware that there was only limited research evidence that related to arts-based creative consultations within a community setting.

The literature review identified a few projects where participants were recruited directly from the community mostly participation was the result of professional referral to an established scheme. One article that specifically looked at how the public engaged with arts in health projects has been written by South (2006). This publication highlighted some key points about such projects:

- Arts in health interventions that are placed within host organisation with pre-existing community contact have variable outcomes. How staff from the host organisation react and portray the new initiative to the community is one factor that influences recruitment and ultimately the success of the intervention.
- The nature of the activity needs to connect with the target population (Cameron et al. 2013) and seeking the views of potential participants is likely to improve later take-up of the initiative.
- The location within the community for the siting of the intervention is important. A key factor is that the venue makes participants feel relaxed and comfortable to encourage full engagement. Also the proximity of the venue to their home and ease of travel to and from are other potential key issues.
- Local people need to feel involved at every stage of the project's development is important as without their contribution wrong decision might be made about type of arts intervention, timing or location.
- Sufficient time needs to be allocated to building local relationships and partnerships. This is particularly important when host organisations are to be

used as venues for the reasons highlighted previously related to recruitment and retention.

- Participants need the opportunity to plan and develop the type of arts intervention with which they would like to engage.
- The work offered by the artist needs to be of good quality.

Research by Hampshire (2010) may be particularly relevant to this study as it specifically looked at arts-based interventions for young people. A key issue for a young person's arts-based project is content. Hampshire (2010) reports that the expectations of young people are important and cites the outcomes of a singing group studied. Recruitment and retention had been difficult because of the credibility of the group among local young people who perceived it as 'uncool' due to the song selection. This made those who wished to participate feel embarrassed about joining and unwilling to admit their membership. Although not discussed by Hampshire (2010) the fact that some participants lied to their friends to conceal their membership highlighted a negative outcome that can arise. Here rather than developing cohesion and positive self-identity the young people participating were experiencing the reverse. The accessibility of the location for one of the groups was also found to be an inhibiting factor that undermined the project outcomes.

This evaluation report outlines the research evidence gathered by the Research Team and also uses the findings outlined above from other studies to develop some key learning points that could assist those wishing to undertake a similar community-based creative consultation.

Findings

The findings are presented in two parts. The first looks at the process of devising and delivering a creative consultation within a community and focuses upon the operation of the Partnership and the creation of the film. The second part considers the learning that was generated from the process.

Part one: The Process

The Partnership

Although the Partnership had come together to develop this project a number of the participants had previously collaborated on other projects. Therefore, there were some pre-established working relationships that gave the project a positive starting point upon which it could develop.

> *We've had interaction before- we've worked with [named person] before.*
>
> (Interview 22)

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It was also apparent that the working practices or methods of many of the participants were similar. One interviewee stated the approach adopted by the project reflected their own organisation's approach to service delivery:

> *…the services that we deliver are as a result of our sort of asking the young people and consulting with them and what they want for the community.*

(Interview 21)

It appeared that it was important for the effectiveness of the Partnership that all of the right people had been involved:

> *…for this project I think the partnership working has worked well…through to the involvement of you guys doing the evaluation, um to um* (the council) *and the third sector kind've running the project getting in organisations to do the video, um I, I think it`s worked really well on this occasion …*

(Interview 15)

There was evidence too that coming together as a Partnership had facilitated networking during the project.

> *… We've been able to share information with each other.*

(Interview 12)

The fact that the Partnership had decided to take a new approach was also identified within the interview data.

> *We didn't entirely know what the project was going to be like*

(Interview 21)

> *I think the idea was brand new to everyone. I think no one was really sure what they wanted except they wanted a film.*

(Interview 23)

There was also awareness that by taking a different approach the Partnership might engage a new part of the community.

> *Organisations that think about film rather than big long documents- it's a good thing to do because it kind of will get to a much broader audience.*

(Interview 25)

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A common theme to emerge from the interview data was the careful thought that the Partnership had given as to what form the arts intervention would take. They made their choice on what they believed would most appeal to the young people and encourage their engagement.

We knew it had to be something that was interactive that the young people would be able to express themselves freely without any controls or inhibitions.

(Interview 23)

The original idea had been a radio show and I recommended that we didn't go down that route because I didn't think the young people from my knowledge and experience would buy into a radio show.

(Interview 21)

It was also apparent that the Partnership had appreciated that some members might have a more informed view of what would appeal to the young people. Furthermore, the views of these members were given precedence during the initial discussions to develop the intervention.

Obviously [named person] knew those young people better than we did so it was you know what would excite them, what would engage them

(Interview 23)

Recognising members might have greater experience and trusting in their views was possibly a reflection of the fact that a number of the partners had worked together previously and had an established relationship. However, not all those in the Partnership had worked together before so there could have been scope for disagreement but the interview data indicates how positive and committed all members were to taking the project forward in a collaborative manner.

Interview data revealed that no organisation from the partnership could have achieved the creative consultation alone:

I think no one organisation on their own could have done it so I think the concept of partnership working driving it has absolutely worked on this occasion. I think if y'know we looked to do it in isolation we'd've really struggled ……

(Interview 15)

As described above the Partnership was comprised of representation from a range of organisations that all had something to contribute to the project. However, one interviewee offered the view that the Partnership felt 'top heavy' at times.

*It felt quite top heavy at times um but … that was inevitable because we're trying to influence those people at the top um, so you know an alternative scenario where all of the focus might have been just on making the thing happen on the ground, might've made the thing on the ground a bit **more**, but without all of that structure above it we would never have had the opportunity to change things, so it felt like it was very kind of necessary but it felt kind've bureaucratic heavy.*

(Interview 11)

In any event the interview data indicated that all of the partners involved were perceived to be committed to the short and long term goals of the project. This was reflected by a member who joined the Partnership late-on who described the spirit of the first meeting they had attended:

they'd (the partnership had) *got one sort of ethos or purpose that they actually wanted to take this forward um and that the children were at the centre of it and it was important to take them forward with us. So to me that seems like quite an effective partnership having sat in other places where you've got one person sort of out on a limb, I think there was that common, common goal and common drive*

(Interview 14)

Commitment to the partnership was perceived to be partly due to partners' interest and belief in the topic (the arts) as well as the potential benefit to their organisations' endeavours:

the kinds of um topic that we were looking at here … were the kinds of topics that not only interested people, secondly that they could believe in but thirdly that they could see their own arenas of work benefitting from … Health were quite keen to become involved and they like Social Care, could see that if this form of approach of partnership working um was effective and had an outcome, it would actually benefit their own agencies.

(Interview 13)

The Film

A recurring theme to emerge from this research was the importance of good relationships to the process. As highlighted above a number of the Partnership members had worked together before and also had a similar style of working. However, the issue of building good relationships at an early stage in the project was frequently mentioned by both professionals and the young people involved in the project.

You can't work with young people until you build a relationship

(Interview 25)

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But it was not only with the young people where relationships had to be built but also with their families if the young people were going to continue participating and the film completed.

> *Sometimes you battle as much with the parents because you know parents don't show much enthusiasm, much interest, much motivation.*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

However, maintaining good relationships and interest in the project with both the young people and their families was strongly facilitated by one member of the Partnership who had well established pre-existing links within the community.

> *We're quite well established around locally. We probably know at least about 500 families on the estate and we have various networks in terms of Facebook pages and social media ….and again it is about asking people first of all putting the feelers out about the project.*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

Even with this established relationship recruitment to the project had difficulties and one key point was the timing of the project which was during the summer exam period.

> *We can't release our child to do anything like that 'cos they're too busy revising'*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

Not only was the timing of the project problematic but the overall duration of the project was felt to be too short. This feeling permeated through the process from the selection of the artists to recruitment and timetabling of the sessions. At each stage there were implications from the lack of time for the project. For example, one applicant was not able to be interviewed as a potential artist to lead the project because they could not attend on the specific day of selection. Another example was during the recruitment phase when more time would have been useful to build relationships within the community. Forming good relationships are important to ensuring take up by and retention of local young people.

> *I can never under estimate the amount of time you need to build a relationship*
>
> *(Interview 25)*

The participation of the young people in the interview panel for the selection of artists/film makers was another key aspect of relationship building. The inclusion of the young people to the selection panel, several Partnership members noted, had been very important. The presence of the young people highlighted that the best way to select a suitable candidate was to observe how applicants interacted with the

young people at interview. In this project young people had had a very strong influence on the decision to commission the selected candidates.

> *They talked to the young people and worked with them immediately and engaged them [at selection interview] and that was very evident to everyone on the panel.*
>
> *(Interview 23)*

The rapport that the filmmakers had with the young people on the interview panel indicated that the relationship between the film makers and the young people was a key factor in the success of the project. This was identified by both members of the Partnership and the young people.

> *They'd got a good relationship with the filmmakers, they'd just got to know them y'know they were having big conversations.*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

> *I was getting quite sad 'cos I wouldn't see [named person] again*
>
> *(Interview 22)*
>
> *They [the filmmakers] became like family*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

The interview data identified a range of different relationships that all had to be effective for the project to thrive. Some of these relationships had been identified by the Partnership but others were perhaps less obvious or overlooked. One such relationship was between the project and the parents the young people involved in the film making. However, due to the working practises of one Partnership member the management of this relationship was addressed. Although it may not have been a key relationship identified at the outset of the project it was a crucial link in enabling the retention of the young people and completion of the film.

> *In between in the filming sessions we'd contact them [the young people] to make sure they were ok and going through what they had done making sure they understood what they'd done and talking to their parents….we would contact home and we would say this is what they've done, this is how they have done it, this is really good, we'd like them to carry on doing that …and keeping the parents on board keeps the young people engaged.*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

The film makers previous experience from similar projects was noted by members of the panel as being a strong positive point in the decision to select them. And this previous experience, it seemed, also made the filmmakers very aware of the network of relationship from which the project had developed and able to recognise that each

Partner had different organisational outcomes that they needed to achieve alongside the delivery of the project.

> *So we knew it had been a collaborative effort of lots of different people and we knew there were lots of different stakeholders that we had to make sure were happy*
>
> *(Interview 25)*

The awareness of the film makers about the need to deliver a range of positive outcomes for the different stakeholders was another positive factor identified within the project delivery phase.

When considering the film's content Partnership members talked about the interviews with professionals. Some commented upon whether the interviewees should have been briefed beforehand.

> *If you are going to have adults like that [professionals] you've got to have a process maybe they need to be prepped in terms of who is doing the interviewing, what their level of understanding is, what angle you would like them to answer from.*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

But it was not only the professionals that might have benefited from some briefing it was also thought that this could also have helped the young people as they planned their film.

> *The brief was we needed to get some key authoritative figures in on this film to give their perspective. But I don't think it was ever explained to the young people as to why it was needed.*
>
> *(Interview 21)*

An issue highlighted by the young people about interviewing the professionals for the film was overcoming their feelings of shyness.

> *I didn't really want to do much interviewing 'cos I don't really like talking to people that much.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

The young people's concerns about interviewing were recognised too by the adults supporting them with the film making process.

> *At the beginning it was kind of stilted but it always is really – you're asking them to talk to someone they don't know. But as the project went on it became more positive.*
>
> *(Interview 25)*

The professional interviews were scheduled at an early stage of the project and could be an issue in terms of how the film making process was planned. This is perhaps supported by the interview data as one interviewee spoke of how the confidence of the young people grew during the project.

By the second weekend we were seeing a change in them and they were more confidently getting on with it.

(Interviewee 25)

The young people, when reflecting on the film making process identified things that we would have liked to have done differently.

I think there should have been more younger people [in the film]'cos there was only 5 and there is more adults and parents

(Interview 22)

Not making it [the film content] so serious

(Interview 22)

It focused more on what people thought not what is actually in [name of place]

(Interview 22)

Put less interviews in

(Interview 22)

The young people had clear ideas about how they would have altered the film's content and this also relates to one aspect in the film making process over which they had limited control; the editing of the footage they had taken.

I don't mean longer [the film], I mean just like put the bits that we wanted in

(Interview 22)

However, the young people recognised that there had not been sufficient time within the project for them to have undertaken the editing themselves. This was also a point noted by a member of the Partnership.

The difficultly was in terms of the physical editing, the young people never got a chance

(Interview 21)

Collectively the comments highlight that both the film and the outcomes for the young people may have been different if there had been more time within the project

to offer either more time to gain confidence in techniques or gain greater control of the various film making processes for the young people.

Part Two: Outcomes

The Partnership

The Partnership members were all very positive about what they had collectively achieved and saw potentially for future working.

> *there will be some obvious progression routes out of this so it's not just wrapped up at the end.*
>
> (Interview 12)

> *Well I think I shall keep on the crest of the wave with the other partners because I think if we keep on that, if you join them with that enthusiasm I think your potential's there. You're bound to have barriers and you're bound to have challenges and there's a situation where funding is very challenging but I think if you can, if you can keep that positive momentum .. so I'd like to join that !*
>
> (Interview 14)

Having achieved the creative consultation there was a very strong sense within the partnership that the members needed to make future plans together:

> *We do need to take it on the next stage and make it absolutely meaningful and y'know we don't want it to come to an end, we want it to move it on to the next level so continuous involvement of the people in the S area, not only to um the Arts and health concept but to have an influence on commissioning services in the long term.*
>
> (Interview 15)

Needing the partnership to continue was not only because it was working effectively in terms of delivery but also for moral reasons:

> *Well I think it's an achievement isn't it when you get a group of people round the table that are like minded and that want to make a change or difference? … 'nd I hope that message gets through to those children and young people that actually we are listening t' them and we're trying to take it forward, what concerns me and I've seen it happened before when people are consulted and then nothing happens and we go back 2 years later and they say 'we've done this', y'know and you've lost that drive.*
>
> (Interview 14)

The feelings of the partnership members reflected the fact that those involved in this creative consultation had been the right ones as they all came from organisations

that could help make the changes highlighted by the film and the consultation process.

> *… they* (the young people) *were asking for more art or more exercise … well actually y'know as a partnership we should make that happen for them and I, I, y'know I think it is achievable … potentially it doesn't have to be at huge costs … Y'know it's already there but is it about making it accessible to them and how do we do that?*
>
> *(Interview 14)*

All members were also acutely aware that their work needed to continue together as each member felt a responsibility not to let the community down; having involved the young people in making the film and successfully engaged local people enabling them to offer their personal views about life in their community.

> *When we completed the delivery I think it began to emerge really clearly it was important to have some kind of sustained offer for the young people involved particularly and that we really need to build on what was really a start of a process for them and to make sure that there were some roads forwards out of this for them and um I think some things have happened quite organically in the process which is really good in that people that are on the ground working from third sector organisations to a whole host of other partners.*
>
> *(Interview 12)*

The interview data indicated that there had been some issues identified by the Partnership about how the project had operated.

> *I think if there was a weakness in the overall process it was about …who was doing what, within what timescales and with who, channels of communication and collaboration.*
>
> *(Interview 13)*

A frequent point raised was the time constraints on the project.

> *That was definitely one of the biggest issues on the project – time*
>
> *(Interview 23)*

Within the Partnership, interviewees spoke of particular issues such as having sufficient time to build effective relationships between members that were necessary for the success of the project.

> *I think that the key with all of this is relationship building and that is actually a very slow process*
>
> *(Interview 11)*

One interviewee noted the tension they experienced between needing to progress the project and the need to develop relationships:

So there's that tension and I'm completely familiar with that but reality is that you've got to get that balance right because if you don't put enough time into the partnerships then that affects the delivery of the work … y'know trust is absolutely key.

(Interview 11)

One of the aspects of the project upon time restrictions had had most impact the interviewees suggested was on recruitment of young people.

If there is anything to rethink it would be around the recruitment probably trying to go around the neighbourhood spending a longer time going around the neighbourhood

(Interview 23)

The numbers weren't as we had expected

(Interview 23)

The project did not recruit all the young people it had hoped. A key point made by members of the Partnership was that the structure of the first weekend had not perhaps appealed to the young people and some who dropped out at an early stage.

The first weekend was very much the boring weekend if you like with the planning

(Interview 23)

And it was after the first weekend that the project lost two young people which echoed the view of one interviewee who believed the initial stage of the project had failed to capture the young people's interest immediately.

It doesn't matter what you promise me in the future if I sit here and I see it is boring then there is a good chance it's going to be boring again so I'm not coming back.

(Interview 21)

The young people were not as direct about the first weekend being boring but one interviewee spoke of how they decided on the second day of the first weekend that they would go to the beach with their family instead of attending as that was a better option for them. The young people also spoke of how being part of the project had been difficult as it meant they had had to make choices about whether to attend the

project or attend other activities which they regularly been involved before this project.

Whilst there was a view that there had been some good leadership and good communication within the partnership there had been issues. Although the strength of the partnership was the diversity of membership this brought a complexity to the partnership working process.

> *I really enjoyed meeting all the partners involved but um the process of working has been not always easy in that there's quite a lot of people involved in this project and … it took me quite a long time to get my head around everything. It took a couple of weeks of just going through everything again and again to get to a stage where I understood everyone's role who was involved, who was no longer involved and that what we hope to deliver would work well … in that sense it had its challenges.*
>
> *(Interview 12)*

Given the complexity of the partnership communication at times was problematic.

> *I think there were difficulties about communication and about um a general understanding of the progression of action.*
>
> *(Interview 23)*

Communication issues may have impacted on delivery for example an invitation to the community day and film showing was perceived to be given at short notice.

> *I think one thing I would say is that I think if we knew about that day earlier we could've um got it out to* (people) *who probably could've made it. I think it was a bit short notice on that.*
>
> *(Interview 15)*

This short notice may have contributed to a lower turn out at the screening. And may also explain an indirect comment made by the young people. They spoke of their disappointment that some of their interviewees had not attended the screening as they had said they would; perhaps this was another outcome of the short notice.

Another issue to emerge from the interview data was how members were sometimes unsure about other people's roles and responsibilities at particular stages during the project.

> *… we needed to clarify quite a few of the roles at an earlier stage in the project 'nd I think we , it got to the point when we were really close to delivery and it wasn't 100% er clarified how many of those roles, what , what each entailed and what peoples' responsibilities were.*
>
> *(Interview 12)*

The development of good relationships for a project like this to succeed permeated throughout the interview data. However, one relationship that was discussed less was that between the Partnership and the people within the community. Although the young people from within the community were recruited to the project the parents only became indirectly involved through their children or by being interviewed for the film. While it could be argued that representatives of the charities involved in the Partnership were proxy members for the community there was no official Partnership member from the community. Had there been possible issues such as the clash with school exams might have been raised earlier. Some of this was highlighted when one member reflected upon the learning they had gained from the Partnership's process of working commenting that:

> *its* (the experience of working as a partner) *only reinforced an opinion I already had but I think this project has really shown me that I think its very unhealthy to be completely removed from people who are essentially the beneficiaries of your project … I personally don't find it helpful to be in a context where I'm trying to plan progress or outcomes or whatever it might be on a partnership project but without engaging with the people who are the recipients at the end of it.*
>
> *(Interview 12)*

The issues of both communication and roles and responsibilities impacted on the degree to which members felt that they could influence the project.

> *I think at every stage we were asked um whether um we want to continue, um and obviously yes you know we'd like to see it through. It was an agreement made … and we wanna see it through to the end.*
>
> *(Interview 15)*

However there were those with a different experience of the project.

> *I certainly did* (feel part of the process) *at the outset … I had a lot of connections and so I was able to feel fairly involved in that part of the process but … we had a long period of quiescence ... I was having incredible difficulty simply understanding what was going on.*
>
> *(Interview 12)*

Reflecting upon the outcomes of the project one interviewee felt that perhaps in hindsight members may have had other resources that could have been useful and made available to the project. However, some of these resources were items that initially did not appear to have direct relevance to the project but experience now showed unforeseen needs can emerge.

> *We could've kind've advertised, marketed the project um even down to practice level looking for volunteers … I think we could've or strategically helped in terms of I mean we have a huge list of um groups in Dorset so we could've advertised it that way so we have a whole kind of local engagement*

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Dorset-wide so, there's something we probably could have done a bit more which would've been … paid for.

<div align="right">(Interview 15)</div>

The reflections of the member upon the outcomes for the project both positive and sometimes negative indicated that the Partnership had learnt from their experience and valued the approach as a positive way of working with a community.

The Film

The Partnership perceived that it had been successful in facilitating the creative consultation project:

I think from the arts point of view it was really successful in that we had, we did have the young people involved in a creative process and they produced something that they were pleased with 'nd that we, y'know the delivery partners were pleased with.

<div align="right">(Interview 12)</div>

The interview data highlighted that the Partners were pleased with the film produced.

The agencies now have a fairly good piece of material that they can begin to work with in a way so not only did it [the film] reach their own peers in terms of young people but it is material that has reached agencies as well.

<div align="right">(Interview 23)</div>

The film potentially challenged outsiders' perspectives of the community.

The … estate has quite a lot of stigmas around historical um problems in that estate and … the film gave quite a powerful representation of the fact people enjoy living there and being part of the community there and I think its important … not to kind've go in with preconceived ideas about what people might think or feel about their own community.

<div align="right">(Interview 12)</div>

Reflecting on the finished film and its value several interviewees spoke about how showing the film to the community had been a very powerful experience because of the impact it had upon the audience.

People were moved by it which was good.

<div align="right">(Interview 25)</div>

The film also seemed to encourage members of the community to describe what it was like to live in the area to professionals whom they would not normal be so open with.

<div align="center">19</div>

When we held the showing there were issues that came out and I was in conversations with parents – I mean they were very forthcoming I mean I was quite shocked with the conversations I had.

(Interview 23)

from that conversations flowed, and from that came um really kind've yeah, moving and personal information really about the families.

(Interview 12)

The fact that members of the community engaged in such candid discussions immediately following the screening of the film was highly beneficial because it was generally acknowledged that the film did not manage to highlight some issues and those that it did were not addressed in great depth.

Film doesn't capture the full picture just a moment in time as seen by those involved.

(Interview 21)

… sometimes they [residents at the screening] had um totally different viewpoints to offer from things that were documented in the film.

(Interview 12)

… I don't think the film touched on quite a few issues that came up when we actually spoke to people in the community centre.

(Interview 12)

Therefore, a key benefit of the film was how it encouraged the community to draw the attention of professionals to their concerns for the area and what they identified as priority issues requiring urgent consideration by local agencies. It was perceived that what had been conducive to residents was discussing their issues through viewing the film in combination with the opportunity for the community to come together in a relaxed environment.

… one thing that really struck me was when we had a community day at the youth club at the end of the delivery stage of the project … it enabled people to have really frank open conversations in a really relaxed environment 'nd feel like they could share their experiences and lots of information was forthcoming from families about issues about, about um mental health particularly that affected them and it was almost like a happy accident that that happened because we didn't engineer the day to ask y'know to ask very leading questions you know or ask personal questions to those families but they volunteered all that information to us.

(Interview 12)

There was a view that the film and subsequent discussion by the community highlighted the value of the arts in accessing views of communities about their needs.

> *It would be really interesting if key decision makers like the CCG 'nd um for example childrens' services colleagues in the Local Authority would see that using arts processes to work with communities and to get their views is worth investing in because actually it can be a very cheap or cost effective way of getting quite a lot of data or information… and I think it would be really lovely if some resources to go into helping to upskill and identify in the first place people that are more local to that community that work in that capacity like other artists for example 'cos we know that there are some there,*
>
> *(Interview 12)*

In terms of opportunities for upskilling, the interview data suggested that making the film had not just been about finding out about the community's perceived needs it had also been about providing an opportunity to the young people within the community.

> *We chose filmmaking because it's not just one skill it's a whole variety of skills*
> *(Interview 23)*

But the opportunity seemed not only to have developed film-making skills but also to have given the young people more self-confidence.

> *I think they felt special and important so I think they're sense of self-worth has improved greatly*
>
> *(Interview 25)*

The interviews with the young people also demonstrated that the filmmaking experience had not only developed skills but had increased their self-esteem and the young people all expressed pride in what they had achieved.

> *I feel proud of it*
> *(Interview 22)*

> *They [parents] didn't expect it was going to be that good*
> *(Interview 22)*

> *I emailed my Head Teacher so they could be showing it at the end of term assembly*
> *(Interview 22)*

However, the young people had also had peers who had been critical of their participation in the project.

> *I had lots of people criticise me about it at school*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

Several of the young people described how they had been criticised by peers for looking bored or not interested during interviews included in the final film. The young people described how they had explained that they had been interested but that they were thinking ahead to what else they needed to ask the person.

> *They [peers] thought I wasn't interested because I was trying to read the questions they had the impression I didn't really care.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

> *Some asked me 'oh were you forced to do the project?' and I was like no I wanted to and they were like 'Why do you want to do it?'*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

But they also described how they had responded to these negative comments and their pride in what they had produced had made them resilient to such challenges from their peers.

The young people clearly enjoyed making the film and described what they gained from the experience.

> *It was fun finding out their [interviewees] views.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

> *It is interesting to hear what [name of place] use to be like.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

They also commented upon how they had thought the film would be and how what began to emerge from their interviews surprised them.

> *The comments we thought we were going to get [from interviewees] would be quite negative but you watch the film it's coming out all positive.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

> *[the interviewees] would be more negative and people would be moaning.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

I think the more people we talked to the more we realised that actually it's alright were we live.

(Interview 22)

These comments about the young people's expectations of the adults within their community reflected a point made by one of the adult interviewees who believed that the filmmaking process had changed something within the community itself.

I felt like that almost by doing the film we'd broken down some of the barriers that had existed in Somerford between different sections of the community.

(Interview 25)

The interview data also suggests that the young people recruited to the project had not fully anticipated what the finished film would be like and the result had exceeded their own expectations.

I didn't know it would turn out that good it looked really professional and stuff.

(Interview 22)

Seeing what they produced had led the young people to think about the experience and how they could use the skills they had learnt and how they would like to take it forward in the future.

Proud of ourselves but we need to do more of it and stay together.

(Interview 22)

During the focus group the young people had each identified roles for themselves if they could make another film. They each recognised the attributes each other could bring to any new filmmaking opportunity and were very confident that they could make another film themselves if they had the equipment. This discussion also highlighted that the project had produced a range of outcomes for these young people that went beyond the film.

I have found a course at college that I would probably do in digital media.

(Interview 22)

The young people had also searched for other work by the filmmakers and felt confident to discuss these.

I've watched a You Tube video of theirs – they done a fashion one.

(Interview 22)

I watched that and it's really good how they done that.

(Interview 22)

> *And I've been watching stand-up cos she's a stand up poet and comedian.*
>
> *(Interview 22)*

Getting to know the filmmakers not only led the young people to explore other types of performance arts but because the filmmakers were not local they young people reflected upon how they had got to know more about another area through discussions with the filmmakers. These reflections of the young people echo what one Partnership member thought their organisation would seek to offer local young people.

> *An experience that they wouldn't perhaps have had in any other way and it's important for young people to have these and the more opportunities there are the bigger their world becomes.*
>
> *(Interview 24)*

Another member of the Partnership had recognised the long-term impact that the project had had upon a specific young person.

> *But out of this it appears as though [named person] will move forward not only in terms of self-esteem but has suddenly woken up to a career that they'd want to do.*
>
> *(Interview 23)*

The young people's comments at interview seems to indicate that they valued all the experiences that the film project offered them including some that may not have been foreseen at the outset of the project.

Discussion

There were several key themes that emerged from the interview data that were identified by both partners engaged with the project at strategic level and also those that facilitated the delivery of the project. These included

- Shared understanding of purpose

- Building and maintaining relationships

- Selection of a suitable venue or location of the intervention

- Understanding of roles and responsibilities

- Ensuring sufficient time for project stages including relationship building and taking into account other external factors that might impinge on project timings

- Selection of an appropriate arts intervention

- Selecting artists that can deliver an engaging, high quality experience for participants

- Supporting those who engage in the project for the short and longer term

- Providing a new understanding of the community for the young film makers, community members and other agencies and organisations working within the area.

- This type of project when it builds on existing relationships can act as a catalyst for more detailed discussion of health and wellbeing issues.

- Peer attitudes to participation

Some of the themes identified were similar to those found within the available literature but in some cases the learning from this project moved forward understanding about how these factors can be influential in terms of success. The following section draws together the findings and where relevant sets them in the context of the literature and finally considers how this relates to the original research questions set by the Partnership.

Shared understanding of purpose

The literature highlighted the need to define concepts that are relevant to the project and to express these clearly in a shared language. What the evidence from this study suggests is there that many of the partners had either worked together and had a shared understanding of working practices or had inherently similar approaches to working with the community. This was highly beneficial to the success of the project

Despite a shared language among the Partners the interview data indicates that the message of the project was not fully communicated to all involved. For example, the choice of the concept of wellbeing was less meaningful to the young people and to some degree their parents. Another area affected by the lack of a shared language was within some interviews conducted by the young people. Here interviewees spoke as they would when in their professional roles and the style of these responses made it difficult for the young people to compose follow up questions on the spot.

Building and maintaining relationships

The findings from this study concur with the literature that effective relationships are central to the success of this type of project. In terms of this study, the findings demonstrated there were many positive aspects to working in partnership. Where partnership structures had been less sound this had been mostly over come through serendipity. A key positive factor was that the Partnership was largely built upon a network of pre-existing working relationships so the group took less time to mature into a cohesive unit therefore even with constraints like time, effective relationships were still formed. However, one area affected by time constraints was potentially the relationship with residents in the community. Furthermore there was scope for residents to act as representatives and members of the partnership who were engaged in the process of delivery of the project was negatively impacted on by time constraints.

Another area identified which could have benefitted from more time was the building of relationships between the young people and the artists. The relationship that did evolve between them was initially strongly dependent upon the involvement of one Partnership member who greatly aided the success of the project by helping to broker this relationship.

Understanding of roles and responsibilities

Due to the pre-existing relationships highlighted above roles and responsibilities appeared to some degree to have been subconsciously allocated. This was reflected in how the Partnership members had two distinctive groups with some members taking on strategic activities while others engaged more with the practical aspects of delivery. This was largely an effective arrangement however there were limitations as possibly some assumptions were made, possibly based on previous project working, about where one person's role ended and another's began. As a result some aspects of the project did not come together perhaps as smoothly as they could have done. In addition some members who had less prior working experience with members expressed feelings of uncertainty at times about what was happening and what their contribution should be. However the shared sense of responsibility within the Partnership to deliver a successful project of benefit to the community was able to overcome the minor issues that arose and keep the project on track.

Overall the approach of the partnership to the project reflects ideas found in the literature on partnership working in general which advocate new thinking on roles and responsibilities. Hunter and Perkins (2014) suggest:

> 'Partnerships might benefit from becoming more explorative, tentative and incremental with both preset and emergent milestones identified. Importantly, the structured arrangements should be just sufficient enough to allow adequate explanation of the unknown.' (p171)

Ensuring sufficient time for project stages and taking into account other external factors that might impinge on project timings

Potentially the biggest limitation for the project was time and this was recognised by all who were involved from the members of the Partnership to the young people who took part. The theme of time and timings permeated all aspects of the project including, relationship building at various points in the project (as already alluded to), ability to recruit the target number of young people, the production of the film and even the short notice for the film screening. However, many of these issues were greatly helped by a combination of one key strong pre-existing relationship within the community, the selection of good quality, experienced artists and the production of a film that the young people and their families felt proud of.

It needs to be acknowledged however, that some timing aspects were beyond the control of the Partnership and a key driver was the availability of funding and the need for project completion by an externally set deadline.

Selection of an appropriate arts intervention

The interview data highlighted that a lot of thought had gone into the type of intervention and what would most engage the members of the community that they wanted to benefit from the intervention. Those who participated found the choice made to be a good one. However, interviews with participants only included those who completed the project and therefore the views of those who decided to drop out have not been captured. Hence it is only possible to state that there was detailed consideration of what to offer and that it appealed to the majority of young people recruited. If there was a limitation in the development of the arts intervention it may have been around the choice of topic for the film. Both members for the delivery group of the Partnership and the young people all highlighted that wellbeing had been a concept that the young people and their families had difficulty initially understanding.

Selection of a suitable venue or location of the intervention

The literature highlighted the importance of selecting the right venue for the success of any art-based project and this was particularly relevant to projects that worked with young people. The selection of the youth club on the estate, familiar to the young people with a welcoming and comfortable environment was a key element to the project's success. Furthermore, being a venue located within the community made it very accessible to the adult residents who later attended the screening and engaged with the creative consultation event. However, for this project, an additional factor related to the venue was its association with one member of the Partnership who had a strong, well established relationship with the community. This echoes

some of the findings within the literature about utilising host organisations and how this can be effective if the host is positive about the introduction of an arts intervention. In addition, the findings from this study indicate the decision to utilise a host organisation definitely facilitated relationship building within the community.

Selecting artists that can deliver an engaging, high quality experience for participants

The literature discusses the importance of having high quality skilled artists to offer a quality experience and there was evidence that the Partnership had achieved this. Inclusion of the young people within the artist recruitment process had been highly beneficial to this successful selection. However, a key influence in the early process of engaging the young people to participate was a member of the Partnership's delivery team. The strong pre-existing relationship that the member had with both the community and in particular the young people was quite crucial and this was particularly the case given the timescale that the artists had to produce the film. Without this 'introduction' for the artists, who were from outside the community, there would have been greater difficulties in engaging the young people – and indeed there were still some difficulties apparent in recruiting and retaining young people on the project.

The young people who engaged with the intervention were very happy with the experience offered overall and the finished film was beyond what they had thought possible. A key skill brought to the project by the artists was their previous experience of working with young people in other communities which enhanced the outcomes of this project. The value of experienced artists is highlighted within the literature as is the need for artists to also be knowledgeable about community development processes.

However, there were some minor issues that upon reflection could have enhanced the experience. The artist would have liked more opportunity to meet with the young people prior to starting the project so they had an opportunity to get to know them outside of the project. The young people would have liked to have made a different type of film or at least included different content and had more of a role in some aspects the key area being editing of the film. None of these issues took away from the positive experience which they had but would have given them more ownership. A way of addressing these issues would have been to have allocated more time to the artists to enable a 'getting to know you' session prior to the start of the project and earlier recruitment of the young people so that they could have fed ideas for the film's content into the Partnership's decision making process which could have informed the artist's brief. An issue with this approach however could be that the young people had at this stage little knowledge of film production processes and would not have perhaps identified the importance of the editing process to ownership of the film.

An area of specific interest from this study in relation to the selection of artists is the fact they were 'outsiders' without a local profile when they started the project. However, the literature stresses the importance of a local profile for the artist but the evidence from this study suggests that being 'outsiders' had some benefits in terms of not restricting them or the young people in how they developed the film. Upon reflection both the young people and the artists concluded that the artists coming from outside the community was beneficial. Of course this finding has to be viewed in context and as highlighted the artists had a very positive introduction into the community from the host organisation so how effective unsupported 'outsiders' might be in another setting is difficult to gauge.

Finally, a factor that enhanced the experience for the young people was the availability of the artists' previous work on social media. This was instrumental to the young people establishing the artists' credibility as professionals particularly because they could easily access this artistic material. It also introduced them to other areas of the arts and encouraged them to appreciate how they could develop the skills they had learnt, possibly even by accessing college courses. Therefore the young people not only engaged but were inspired to take forward some of the skills and consider careers in an area that they might not otherwise have considered. In essence, it opened up new horizons.

Supporting those who engage with the project for both the short and longer term

The literature highlights the need to have a good social health/voluntary infrastructure in place to step in at the end of an initiative where people have made choices to change or develop. A limitation of this project was a lack of planning of such provision. However the partnership was committed and acknowledged their responsibility to put such support in place (Please refer to the section at the end of this report regarding the Partnership's plans for the future).

Gaining understanding of your community - acting as a catalyst for more detailed discussion of health and wellbeing issues.

There was good evidence from the interview data that participating in the project had wider benefits for the both the young people and the community. The artists believed that the film making process which brought young people and adults from the community together had started to 'break down barriers'. The young people themselves identified that their views of the adults had altered as they had not expected so many positive viewpoints about the area. The young people also valued the opportunity to know more about the changes to their community over time and to hear what life had been like in the past. Collectively these factors seemed to have generated within the young people a greater attachment to their community and to some a degree pride in their area.

Therefore, a key benefit of the film was how it encouraged the community to draw the attention of professionals to their concerns for the area and what they identified as priority issues requiring urgent consideration by local agencies. It was perceived that what had been conducive to residents was discussing their issues through viewing the film in combination with the opportunity for the community to come together in a relaxed environment.

Peer attitudes to participation

The findings from this study picked up on a theme from published research which identified the perceptions of peers to participation could have implications for the value of the intervention. In the previous study the perception of peers that the arts based intervention was 'uncool' lend to issues for the intervention in terms of recruitment and retention but also led some who wished to take part to conceal their involvement. This study takes this issue further by indicating that peers will still challenge participants even after completion of an intervention. As the perceptions of peers was only known once the film was completed and available to view it cannot be gauged how the views of peers would have influenced the young people's decision to continue making the film. This therefore raises questions about how projects counter and manage peers comments that have the potential to undermine both the value of the project to the young person and the individual's self-esteem – an issue of particular importance given the purpose of many arts based projects. This findings also highlights whatever strategy is employed to support young people in this issue needs to consider not only the points of recruitment and participation but the immediate post intervention period particularly if the project produces something that is publically accessible. In the context of this project the young people were resilient and defended their film to their peers which could be a reflection of their pride in their work. Therefore, possibly a product perceived by the participants as less successful may not have enabled such a positive defence.

Conclusion

The findings from this project demonstrate that a creative consultation process, if managed effectively can be a powerful mechanism for establishing a community's perspective on their health and wellbeing. The findings indicate that a suitable process begins with the community being facilitated to produce an arts-based artefact or event. But it is essential for this to be combined with a subsequent, informal community event held in a comfortable familiar place within the community to share their arts-based work. Then, the artwork becomes the trigger for in-depth, and at times very personal discussion which reveals to professionals commissioning services the community's perspectives about their health and wellbeing experience in their own locality.

Based upon the evaluation question set by the Partnership the research team through an inductive, qualitative research methodology were able to identify particular issues that facilitated better outcomes for this type of community consultation. In terms of the first question:

Key Learning Points

Was the partnership effective in facilitating the arts based consultation and engaging the local community about health and wellbeing?

It appears that the film as an artefact developed through the creative consultation process engaged the community in discussion. The filmmaking itself was a process that engaged young people with health and wellbeing but also the filmmaking process offered them wider horizons for the duration of the project and potentially the future. Strategically the creative consultation process reflects recommended principles for Local Authority practice to promote the health and reduce inequalities of young people in their areas.

In 2015 Public Health England in association with the Association for Young People's Health published a framework for improving health and wellbeing (PHE 2015). The framework suggests local authorities should follow certain principles for promoting health and reducing inequalities for young people in their areas (see PHE 2015). It appears that the creative consultation project evaluated in this document has been successful in employing at least 2 of the 6 recommended principles ie:

- to consider young people holistically not in terms of single health issues.

- To support young people in building resilience and working with others such as their community and families.

And on that basis could be recommended as a process in other communities.

Based on the findings from this evaluation recommendations for engaging communities in discussion of their health and wellbeing are as follows:

- Facilitate communities in using the arts to develop an artefact or event to engage other members of the community in discussion about their health and wellbeing.

- Followed by an informal community event in a comfortable familiar place in the community to display the art work and to act as a trigger for further discussion about the community's perspectives.

Findings from this research indicate that a two staged process as outlined above was highly beneficial. For example although mental health was only touched upon by the film many people from the community highlighted during post-screening discussions that locally there were unmet needs around mental health and wellbeing particularly for young people living within their community.

The second question the evaluation process set out to answer was:

What did organisations involved in the partnership learn about the process of partnership working?

- The film was an output from the project but it was not the main output. The film was in fact a vehicle to encourage the community to be open and frank about their lives and needs and it was these subsequent conversations after the screening that was the substantive output of the project. This finding reflects those from the literature review related to audiences watching dramas created to explore health issues. Cox et al. (2009) and Nisker et al. (2006) argue that the arts has the potential to be a powerful engagement tool when used in public consultation.

- The need to be clear about the remit of the project and ensure that all Partners are fully aware of this. Furthermore, a mechanism for improved communication that allows any changes that are required as the project evolves to be shared via regular briefings.

- Communication mechanisms and roles and responsibilities need to be clarified at the outset of any project. However care should be taken to ensure this should not be so prescriptive that it compromises the creativity and evolution of the initiative.

- Host organisations, when used can have a significant impact upon the project – either positively or negatively so it is key to ensure any selected host organisation (and its associated staff) are 'in tune' with the goals of Partnership and their initiative.

- An audit at an early stage of existing resources available to the Partnership.

- For the young people the outcomes of the filmmaking opportunity went far beyond the finished film. The process gave them new skills in the arts but also encouraged them to become more resilient to their peers, more eager to find out about life outside of their community and made them aspire to other learning opportunities they had not considered before.

- Effective planning that will maximise the positive experience for participants and possibly the film produced is essential. Aspects to consider include briefing the young people more about the project and inviting them to think about it before the start of the project. Briefing professionals contributing interviews and possibly also other adults about the nature of the interview and allowing more time for the film makers to get to know the young people prior to the official start of the project.

- Sufficient time needs to be allocated at the start of the project. Key areas are the time to build effective relationships within the Partnership, with the community and between artists and participants. Issues of time and timing permeated throughout the project including the recruitment period for young people, the timing of the project (during the summer exam period), production issues for the film (such as editing opportunities) and arrangement of the community screening.

- The Partnership did not seem to have considered the potential reactions of the young people's peers to the film and in particular if these comments were critical of their film. Previous research into young people's arts in health projects has identified the issue of peer criticism (Hampshire 2010) but these findings related to attending a project whereas the circulation of the film post-participation was the trigger for these comments. However, experience of the project seems to have made the young people more resilient and able to deal with the comments. However, where participation and peer comment coincide then some thought should be given to how the young people should be supported if needed.

- Ensure that the project meets the expectations of the young people both in terms of the choice of arts activity and what participation will offer them. This could relate to new skills or introducing them to professionals with the type of expertise that the young people appreciate and enjoy. In this way the project is about motivating the young people to find out about things they have not previously considered. Also planning to provide flexible support for young people who want to move forward into further learning or work experience as a result of involvement in this type of project needs to be a key part of any partnership plans from the start.

These Learning Points take up an issue raised by Baggott (2013) who recommends that the evaluation of partnership working should 'Examine the impact of outcomes as well as processes; (p171). Furthermore this research should offer as he suggests the 'sharing of lessons and enabling others to learn from experience (p171).

Future Plans of the Partnership

Following the creative consultation process the partnership members discussed how follow up activity was paramount and there was considerable discussion about how to continue to develop the engagement with young people achieved by the project. Discussion included how an initial intention regarding the project was that it should inform strategy development. Members of the partnership recognised that there was now a need to identify how the project informs new Health and Wellbeing Board strategy development. To this end the young people would be asked to present their film to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children's Trust. In addition members explored further ways they could continue to work together long term to facilitate extension of their work together. A way forward was seen to lie around bidding for resources together and this was seen as an exciting opportunity given the breadth of the partnership and members' track record of joined-up thinking and working. It was highlighted that young people themselves should be part of any future bidding process.

If you have any further questions regarding this report then please contact:

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