

# Growing health, connection and meaning through creativity in Northern Devon

## What we did

We used creative interventions to support the health and wellbeing of 120 people across four priority groups in Braunton, South Molton, Torrington and Bideford.

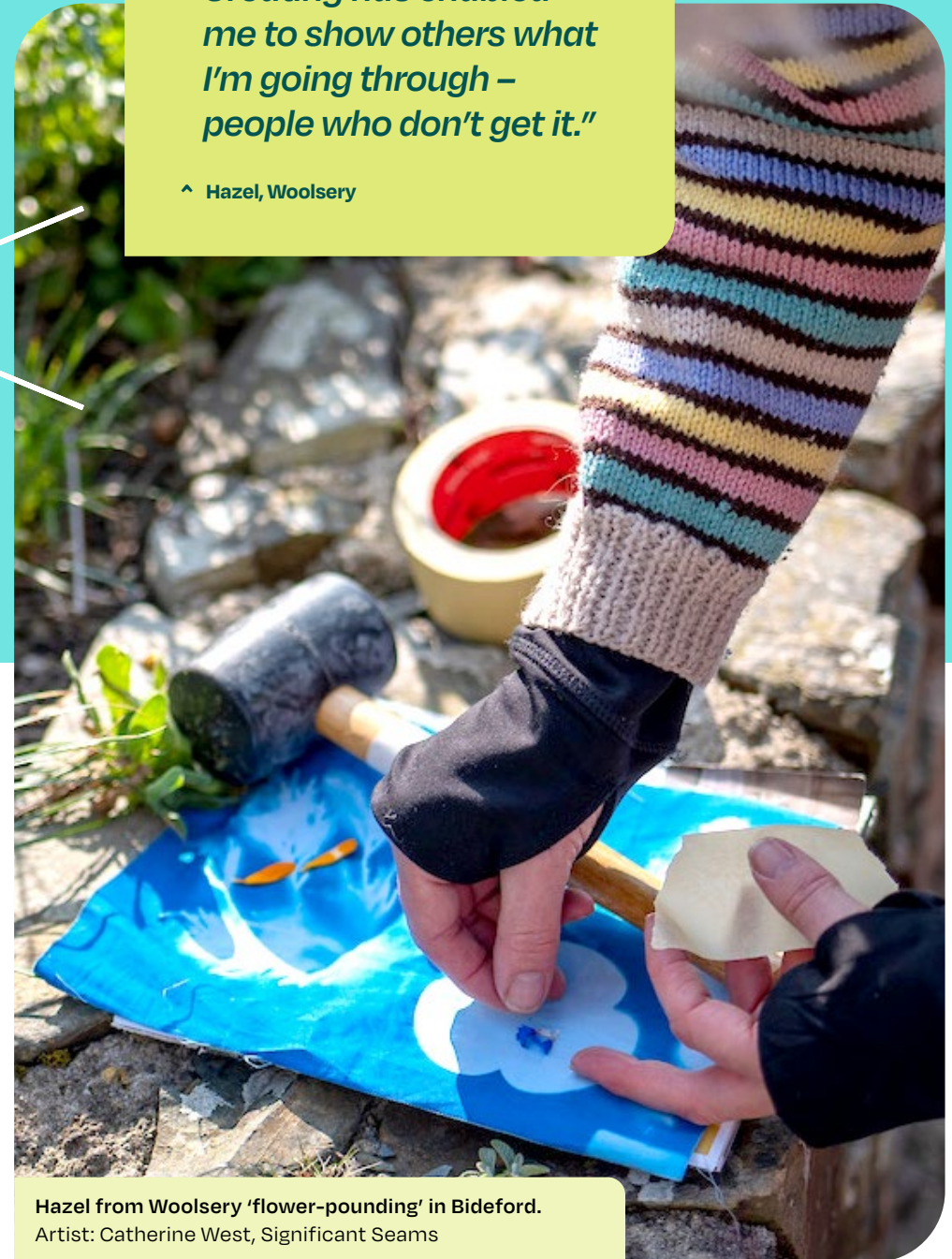
Cultural, NHS healthcare and community partners worked together with a creative project manager. Facilitated by specialist artists, four participatory projects offered time and space to reflect, share and build deep social connections through creativity.

Delivered in partnership with Beaford Arts and Northern Devon's cultural sector, the case study was independently evaluated by Take a Part. It was funded by Arts Council England and Devon County Council.

We supported local people affected by health inequalities – the same people who have been worst affected by the pandemic.

*“Creating has enabled me to show others what I’m going through – people who don’t get it.”*

^ Hazel, Woolsery



Hazel from Woolsery 'flower-pounding' in Bideford.  
Artist: Catherine West, Significant Seams

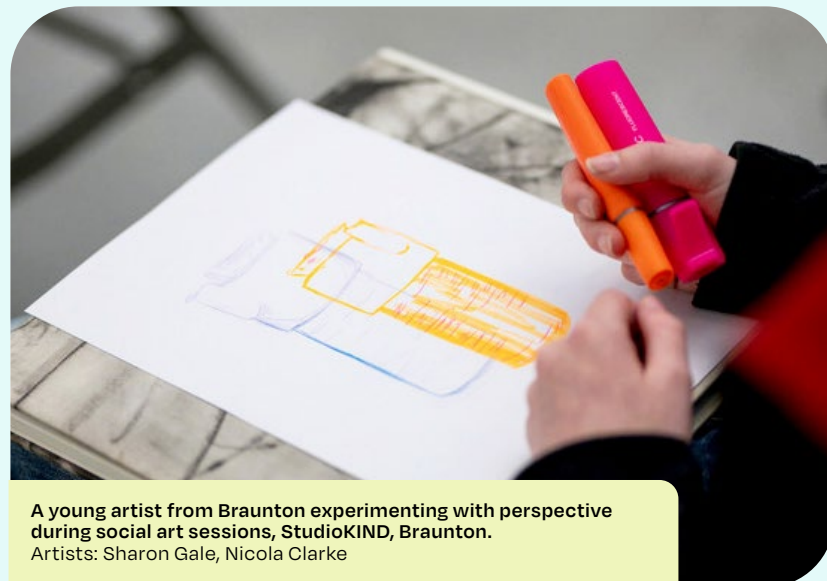
## Referrals

Many participants joined via their GP Social Prescribers or Link Workers.



*" Watching the transformation in the participants – their engagement and growth in confidence was amazing [...] I hope you have helped to sow the seeds for something really valuable for our community going forward."*

^ Susanna Hill, Chair, Live Well in Braunton and GP, Caen Medical Centre



A young artist from Braunton experimenting with perspective during social art sessions, StudioKIND, Braunton.  
Artists: Sharon Gale, Nicola Clarke



*" This has been a great opportunity for these people to connect with each other on a collective creative project. Knowing two of them and their stories very well, I'm so pleased to see them engaging [in] this opportunity to help them continue along their recovery journey."*

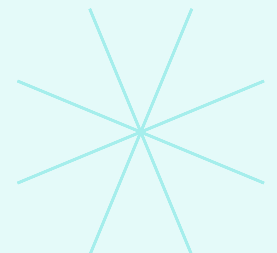
^ Ruth Tapsell, Chair, One Atlantic and GP, Hartland Surgery

*" It was very moving to see a patient of mine who I referred into the project engaging in the creative activities and talking about her experiences."*

^ Verity Hookway, Social Prescriber, Torrridge Primary Care Network

### Our target groups:

- 16-25-year-olds living with anxiety and depression
- Young families juggling childcare, health and income pressures
- Older adults experiencing isolation, loneliness, bereavement and health challenges
- Adults living with long-term health conditions



## What we learned

We found that the creative activities helped people to cultivate better health and happiness, by restoring:

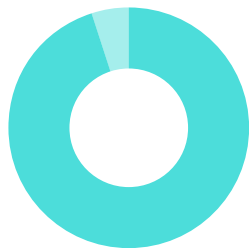
- connections with others
- purpose and meaning
- relaxation
- confidence
- self esteem



As a direct result of the creative activity, out of **120 participants**:

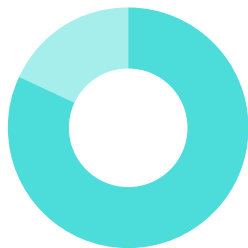
**95%**

reported improvement in their mental health and wellbeing



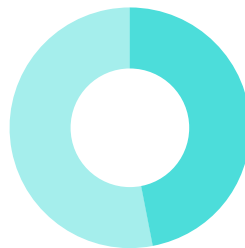
**82%**

reported increased feelings of connectedness



**47%**

reported learning a new skill or improving an existing one



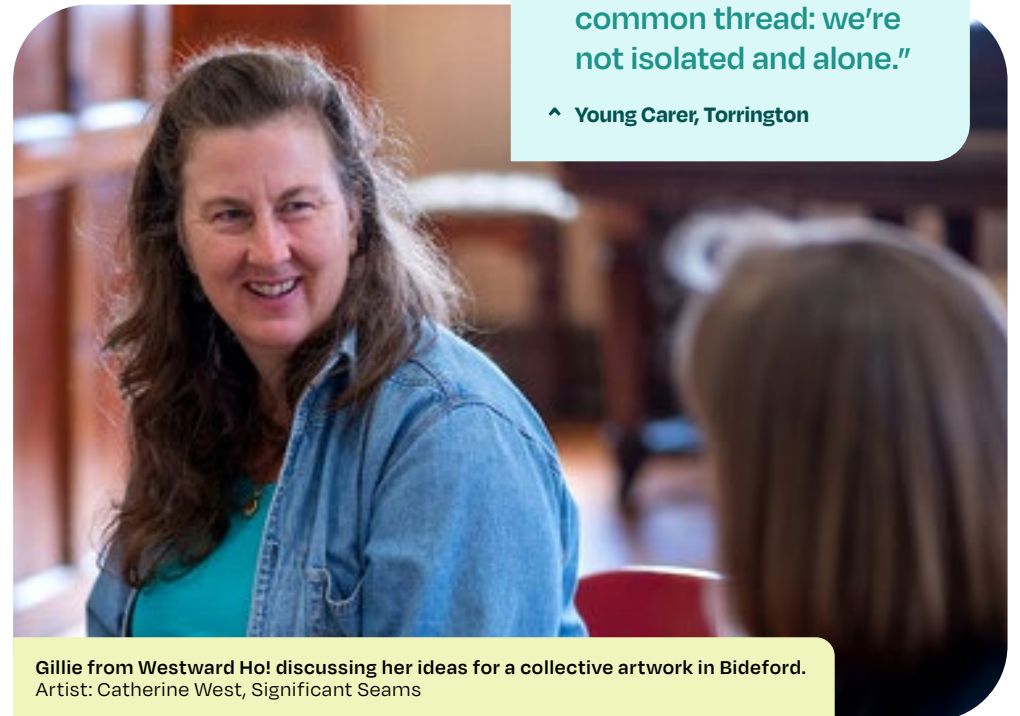
## Restoring connectedness

*"A lot of modern life is how much you can perform, step up, on your own. Working collaboratively with a project gives confidence that it's not all on you. The group enables me to bloom into what I want to be."*

^ Gillie, Westward Ho!

*"We were all chipping in and getting it done together. There was a common thread: we're not isolated and alone."*

^ Young Carer, Torrington



Gillie from Westward Ho! discussing her ideas for a collective artwork in Bideford.  
Artist: Catherine West, Significant Seams

## Rebuilding purpose and meaning

*" I would absolutely love to make art again, especially with friends I've made here. It would be great to create something which means something to all of us and expresses how we've got through things."*

^ Natasha, South Molton

## Enabling relaxation

*" It has been great to see smiles, grins, bright eyes and laughter... being with others and being encouraged to use art as a way of relaxing."*

^ Cared-for older person, Torrington

## Rebuilding confidence

*" This gives me a purpose other than being a mum. I feel like I've got a lot more about me."*

^ Participant, South Molton

## Renewing self-esteem

*" Valued. It's made me feel valued."*

^ Anne, Bideford

## What next?

We hope to continue this story. We need your support.

### Phase 1 partners:

One Northern Devon

Beaford Arts

Northern Devon's cultural sector

### Artists:

Catherine West

(Significant Seams, Lead Commission)

Bridget Cordory, Sharon Gale,

Rose Hunter, Ruth Mee,

Philip Robinson

### Creative project manager:

Claire Gulliver

### Evaluation:

Take a Part

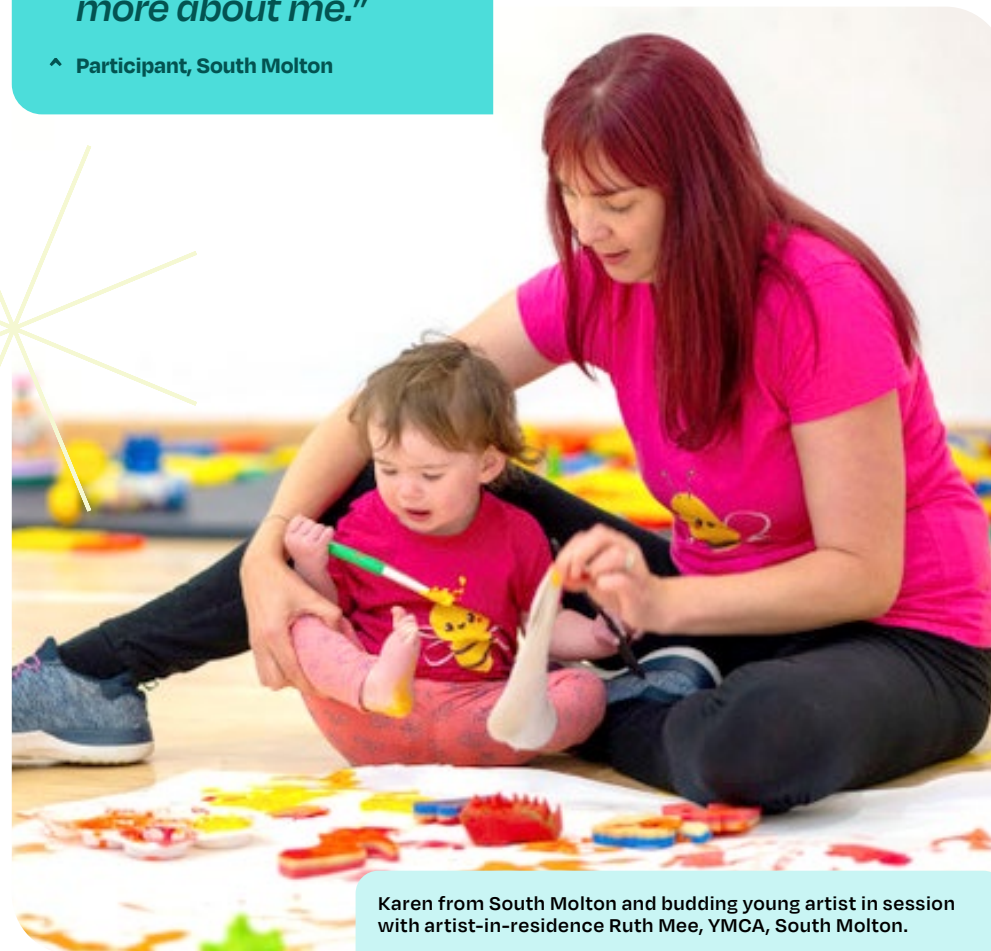
### Photography / Videography:

Gillian Taylor, Jim Wileman

Thank you to all the participants.

Full evaluation report available from:

[claire@clairegulliver.co.uk](mailto:claire@clairegulliver.co.uk)



Karen from South Molton and budding young artist in session with artist-in-residence Ruth Mee, YMCA, South Molton.