

# ewmpas

For economic and social change

## Mission Gallery and Crisis

'Can art act as a vehicle to counteract loneliness in those impacted by homelessness?'

Evaluation Report





Gyda'n gilydd  
byddwn yn  
rhoi terfyn ar  
ddigartrefedd  
Together  
we will end  
homelessness



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Cwmpas would like to thank the Crisis members who took part in this evaluation, for giving their time and sharing their experiences with us. We would also like to thank the artists involved in the project for sharing their reflections with us and the teams at Crisis and Mission Gallery for sharing many of the photos used in this report.

## 1. Overview

The project was a collaboration between Mission Gallery and Crisis, funded through the Arts, Health and Wellbeing National Lottery funding programme, with match funding provided by Crisis.

The project ran from January 2023 to September 2023 and asks the question, "Can art act as a vehicle to counteract loneliness in those impacted by homelessness?" The project evolved from collaborative workshops developed by Crisis and Mission Gallery to support Crisis members during the COVID pandemic. Homelessness can impact anyone and does not have one specific cause. A 2019 Public Health Wales report observed, "Around one in 14 (7%) of the Welsh adult general population reported lived experience of homelessness..."<sup>1</sup>

The Arts, Health and Wellbeing fund's broad aims are to "benefit some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our communities"<sup>2</sup> through the "restorative power of the arts".<sup>3</sup> The project was designed around the central aims of the Arts, Health and Wellbeing fund with the project designed to address two of the Fund's urgent priorities - 'supporting mental health and wellbeing' and reducing 'health inequalities'<sup>4</sup>.

Cwmpas were contracted as evaluators from the start of the project, enabling a collaborative and formative evaluative approach with both Mission Gallery and Crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://phw.nhs.wales/files/aces/voices-of-those-with-lived-experiences-of-homelessness-and-adversity-in-wales-informing-prevention-and-response-2019/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-08/Arts%2C Health and Wellbeing Lottery Funding Guidelines 2023%5B1%5D.pdf](https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-08/Arts%2C%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Lottery%20Funding%20Guidelines%202023%5B1%5D.pdf)

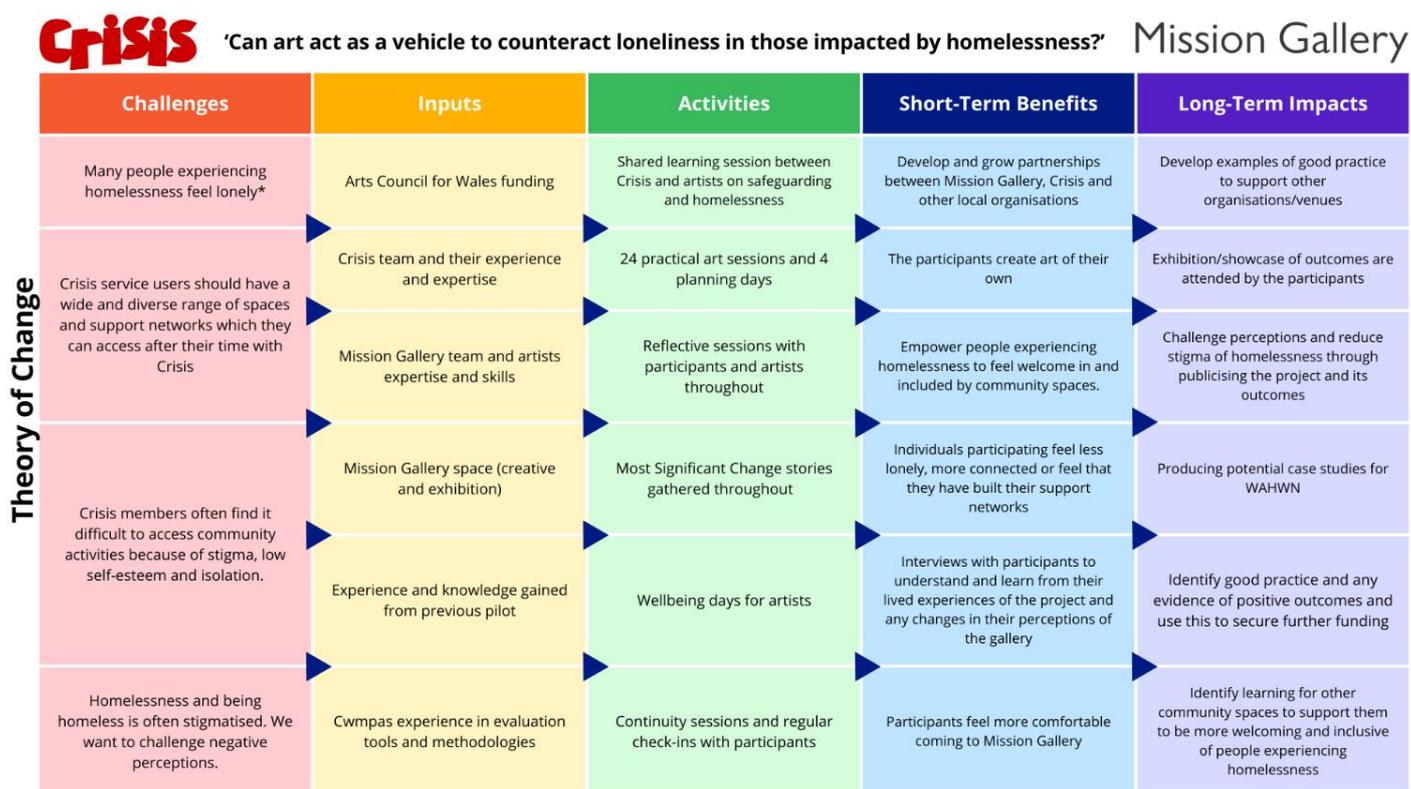
<sup>3</sup> <https://arts.wales/our-impact/how-we-reach-wider-audiences/arts-and-health>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Aims

The project's central aim was to explore the question, "Can art act as a vehicle to counteract loneliness in those impacted by homelessness?" Loneliness is a significant issue amongst people experiencing homelessness as found in a report by Crisis in 2015, "I was all on my own': experiences of loneliness and isolation amongst homeless people"<sup>5</sup>, six in every ten homeless people felt lonely. The report also found that 75% of the homeless people surveyed experienced stigma and that "their experiences of homelessness had had a negative effect on their well-being."<sup>6</sup>

Mission Gallery, Crisis and Cwmpas met at the beginning of the project to create a Theory of Change and discuss how the central project question should be addressed. Below is the agreed Theory of Change, showing the challenges, inputs and activities and illustrating how these inputs will result in the desired short and long term outcomes.



Risk, Barriers, Enablers	
Disengagement from service users	People may not attend for a variety of reasons. This may make it difficult to measure the impact of the project.
Transportation- participants getting to and from the sessions	Some of the people who might want to engage with the project may have difficulty in attending because of a lack of access to transport. Crisis provides bus tickets for people to attend but the infrastructure does not always support this.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis\\_i\\_was\\_all\\_on\\_my\\_own\\_2016.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis_i_was_all_on_my_own_2016.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The project primarily wanted to help individual Crisis members to feel more connected, to develop stronger support networks and to reduce any feelings of loneliness. At the start of the project it was not known how many Crisis members would participate in the project. It was identified as a potential risk during the creation of the Theory of Change, that Crisis members may only attend one or two sessions, and this might make it difficult to evaluate the impact of the project on these individuals. It was agreed that we would use the UCLA 3 Item Loneliness Scale<sup>7</sup> to evaluate the participants feelings of loneliness, particularly as this was used in the 2015 Crisis report<sup>8</sup>. This methodology felt appropriate as a short, straightforward scaled survey is less burdensome on participants and helpful in exploring patterns in data amongst larger groups of people. It was expected that there could be a number of participants attending only one or two sessions each and this method would help to identify any trends in feelings of loneliness in a more transient and changing participant group.

During this initial meeting, it became very clear that the ethos behind this project is to centre and amplify the voices of people experiencing homelessness. We agreed that the most appropriate way to capture the thoughts and feelings of the participants was through the Most Significant Change methodology.<sup>9</sup> This to capture reflections from the Crisis members about how they experienced the project and what was significant for them. Whilst case studies are an extremely useful and valuable tool in illustrating the impact of a project or intervention, they are often told from the perspective of the project team or evaluator, rather than from the perspective of the individual involved. The Most Significant Change methodology is participatory and is a way of empowering participants to express their own opinions about the impact that the project has had on their lives and gives them a sense of ownership over their story.

The project plan to have workshops in a gallery space was intended to act both as a way of supporting Crisis members to develop confidence in going to and using unfamiliar community venues, as well as to support them to become comfortable accessing cultural spaces such as Mission Gallery. In their support letter for the project, Crisis stated that,

“... members who engage with group activities where they are able to form positive relationships are more resilient and able to leave homelessness in a sustainable way...Delivering classes in the community are an ideal way for members to progress beyond Crisis but still have the safety net of familiar staff and peers; moving into external community opportunities then becomes the natural next step for people in becoming autonomous of our service.”

The project also wanted to use this learning to help Mission Gallery and other cultural spaces to be more welcoming of and accessible to people experiencing homelessness in the future.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/measuringlonelinessguidanceforuseofthenationalindicatorsonsurveys/pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis\\_i\\_was\\_all\\_on\\_my\\_own\\_2016.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis_i_was_all_on_my_own_2016.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/most-significant-change#:~:text=The%20Most%20Significant%20Change%20\(MSC,the%20most%20significant%20%E2%80%93%20and%20why.](https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/most-significant-change#:~:text=The%20Most%20Significant%20Change%20(MSC,the%20most%20significant%20%E2%80%93%20and%20why.)

### 3. The Artists and Workshops

The project was designed around the delivery of four sets of workshops, led by four different artists. Each workshop had six sessions and had a different artist bringing their own practice and area of expertise to the sessions. Each of the artists had a planning session with the group prior to the workshops that enabled a co-produced approach to the sessions. The artists also had a safeguarding session facilitated by Crisis at the start of the project, which provided clear pathways for sharing any concerns should they arise during the project.

[Lisa Burkl](#) is a Swansea based artist, specialising in glass. Her work is inspired by symbolism, iconography, colour, light, reflection and projection and she is experienced in working with groups who have experienced trauma, such individuals who have experienced sexual violence.

Lisa worked with the participants to create glass pieces, supporting them to express their feelings and to make positive affirmations about themselves.





Lisa observed the group grow in confidence, both in their own creative skills and in their ability to connect with her and each other. She reflected that the act of creating art can be very healing. It can focus our minds on the present and on small things that bring us joy. Lisa told us that she had found the experience “humbling” and “inspiring” and that it had expanded her own practice. She had found new ways to solve problems and support people who were finding the creative process challenging. She reflected that the Crisis members were “amazing” and that she had learned as much from them as they had learned from her.

[Armağan and Nese Aydin](#) are mosaic artists from Turkey, based in Swansea. They came to Swansea seeking asylum and they are human rights activists supporting freedom of expression and supporting communities.<sup>10</sup>

Armağan and Nese worked with the participants to create both large and small mosaics using broken pieces of tiles and other ceramics. One Crisis member said that the mosaic sessions had been particularly helpful for them, reflecting that their healing process and the impact that the art sessions had had on their wellbeing felt similar to the mosaic making process,

*“It’s like a mosaic – like something broken that is put back together to make something better.”*



<sup>10</sup> <https://cov19chronicles.com/good-morning-summer/>

[Osian Grifford](#) is a Cardiff based artist, illustrator, writer and performer. His work is often with children in pupil referral units or looked after children, helping them to create their own narratives and stories about their experiences.

Osian centred the workshops with the Crisis members around creating zines<sup>11</sup>. His workshops enabled the participants to use illustration and cut out collages of text and images to create short stories. The stories were very personal to the Crisis members and supported some of them to express feelings and experiences in a way that felt empowering.



When we spoke with Osian, he reflected about how he initially started his sessions with a plan to facilitate the group to collaborate on a project, but soon realised that the group wanted to take things more gently, and use the time to socialise and work on their own ideas. He found that the collages worked well with the group as this enabled them to express their thoughts and feelings, many using humour and creating what he described as “beautiful, remarkable, funny” stories. He felt that the Gallery had created a really safe space and that the group had taken ownership of the sessions in a really positive way.

<sup>11</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zine>

[Sahar Saki](#), an artist from Iran based in Cardiff, who specialises in calligraphy and Persian design. She sees art as a way to connect people and communities “a tool to communicate and make bridges between different cultures especially minorities in Wales”<sup>12</sup> Sahar worked with the participants to create objects (tote bags, wall hangings) using Persian words and bright colours.



During one of the sessions we attended, the Crisis members were asked to think of words or ideas that were really meaningful to them, such as family, love, peace, home. Sahar supported the Crisis members to use the Persian translation for these words and create wall hangings centred around these words. We observed the members carefully considering and discussing which word to choose and listening to each other explain their choice. Each hanging had a meaning and significance for the individual beyond the intricate Persian designs and colours.

Sahar reflected that she had not known what to expect when starting the sessions, but that it had been her, “favourite workshop ever”. She felt that the group had changed her perception of what it meant to be homeless and that she had loved the positive, supportive energy of the sessions. Sahar felt that Mission Gallery had created a safe, welcoming space which helped her to feel relaxed and connected to the Crisis members. She had really valued having someone from Crisis at each session, which she felt was supportive of her ability to fully focus on the sessions.

<sup>12</sup> <https://onyourfacecollective.org/Sahar-Saki>

Cwmpas were able to attend a few of the workshops and we observed a very relaxed, informal environment. The Gallery was closed to the public during the sessions, so the participants had the space to themselves. The space used within the gallery itself was welcoming, with the same members of Mission Gallery staff present to support the workshop, participants and artists.

There was an inviting range of drinks and snacks available throughout the sessions and participants were free to come and go and to chat. The workshops we observed were very collaborative, friendly and welcoming to new attendees. It was clear that the group had become very supportive of each other as the sessions developed, with participants providing transport for each other and checking in on one another outside of sessions. Many of the participants had attended all of the workshops and had formed relationships with the artists and Mission Gallery staff as well as with each other. Many of these friendships continued outside of the sessions, and provided evidence of the participants building support networks and friendships as a result of the project.

Between 30 September and 11 November 2023, once the workshops had ended, Mission Gallery then displayed the collective artworks created throughout the project in their gallery in an exhibition called [‘A Sense of Place’](#). The Gallery held an event to celebrate the opening of the exhibition and the end of the project, and many of the Crisis team, artists and participants attended. The participants in particular expressed their pride in seeing their art on display in a gallery, as one Crisis member remarked to us at the event, “next to proper artists.”



## 4. Impact

The project's Theory of Change identified that there were two overarching outcomes that it set out to achieve:

Firstly, to explore the impact of art on loneliness amongst people experiencing homelessness – specifically to support homeless people to feel more connected, less lonely and to build better support networks.

Secondly, to learn from people with lived experience to help Mission Gallery to be a space which homeless people feel welcome in and somewhere they are able to visit. Part of this outcome was to use any learning from this project to support other cultural and artistic spaces to become more accessible to people experiencing homelessness.

We will explore these two project strands separately below.

### 4.1 Individual Impacts

Initially, as discussed earlier in this report, the project had intended to use the UCLA 3 Item Loneliness Scale to measure the impact of the project on the participants feelings of loneliness. However, as the project progressed it became clear that participants were attending regularly and that a core group of attendees was developing. As a project team, we met to revise our evaluation methodology and decided that the Most Significant Change methodology alone would be a better suited to capturing the depth of the experiences of the Crisis members and their feelings about the impact of the project on their lives.

The Most Significant Change methodology asks broad questions asking people to reflect on the changes they have experienced and what brought these changes about. There are no questions about the specific project outcomes and we did not ask the participants about loneliness. The Most Significant Change methodology allows participants to talk about what is important to them, how things were before, how they are now and to reflect on what happened to bring about any changes they have noticed. The participants can identify both negative and positive changes. The stories are told in the voices of the participants, using their words alone. They are also asked to give their story a 'snappy title', which frames each story.

Cwmpas gathered 4 Most Significant Change stories from the Crisis members. These are reproduced in full below. The stories appear as expressed to us, in the words of the participants.



## Crafting to Confidence

### Background to my story

My name is Patrice and I am 43, from Briton Ferry.

I have a daughter and a son. I left an abusive marriage a few years ago. My ex-husband was very controlling and isolated me from my friends so I had no support. I felt really worthless. My son stayed with my husband. I don't see him very much.

I moved into private rented accommodation after leaving my husband, but I was given notice by the landlord – this is how I came into contact with Crisis.

I used to have a job as a Housing Assistant but had to stop working because of my health- I have epilepsy.

## What changes have come about as a result of being part of the Mission Gallery art sessions?

- I got to know people better in the sessions
- Realised I enjoy being creative
- Feel I am good at art – can do it!
- Learned loads from the pros
- I look forward to each session
- I feel a buzz all day afterwards
- Motivated to do things in my life after session
- Feel better about myself – more confident
- Thinking of going to University! Would never have thought of this before!
- I felt intimidated at first, felt University was too expensive, that I wasn't good enough
- I feel welcome in the Gallery space – such a lovely space – it is homely
- I don't have as much time to do housework now though!

## Which one of these changes is the most significant to me and why?

My confidence. Knowing I **can** do things. Having the freedom to try new things and push myself.

It's brought me back to being me

## What it was like before?

I've tried things creative before, but they didn't work – I need tips and tricks from the pros!

I see this as therapy – “my art and craft therapy”. What's the worst that can happen?

## What it is like now?

I will try anything now – even illustration which I don't feel as confident about.

I feel confident and supported to take risks and for things to not go right.

## What do you think made the changes come about?

Being in a small group

Having got to know each other

Building each other's confidence

Positive attitudes – no negative comments (just friendly banter!)

We help each other

## Crisis to Creative



### Background to my story

My name is Dawn. I have a dog called Petra who I have had since she was 10 weeks old. Petra knows before I do when I am going to have a seizure. She looks after me – we have a really strong bond.

I was living in Shropshire and working as a dog groomer when my relationship broke down because my partner was drinking heavily and became abusive. I felt I had to leave and my mental health was all over the place.

I came to Swansea to stay with a friend. I moved about a lot, sleeping on sofas and then went into a homeless hotel.

## What changes have come about as a result of being part of the Mission Gallery art sessions?

- I call myself an artist now
- I have tried so many different techniques and types of art
- I love painting – I now have a painting that I made on sale in a gallery!
- I feel I have options for the future – before I felt I didn't have any
- I have taken time to heal
- I'd never been in Mission Gallery before, and I found it stressful, but now I feel comfortable there.

## Which one of these changes is the most significant to me and why?

Calling myself an artist.

A gallery rates my work and wanted to display it – I'm good at painting, which I didn't acknowledge before.

I feel I have learned so much from Crisis and the Mission Gallery artists. Not just about art but about what I am good at. I have confidence now. I have plans for the future – which I didn't before. I have options and choices. When I left my partner and when I was homeless I felt I had no options and everything felt uncertain. I was at such a low point.

Art is so helpful for your mental health. I have self-belief now and self-esteem. When you are in a shitty relationship, you take the blame on yourself.

## What it was like before?

During COVID my business shut down and I had no job, no income – then no partner. I had to just take a leap of faith and leave and trust that it would be better than the situation I was in.

Crisis really helped – helped me find a flat and supported me when my benefits got messed up and I had no money. I was using food banks and really worried about how I would feed Petra. I was at a really low point mentally.

## What it is like now?

Really positive.

I am sad to be moving on from Crisis, but I am moving on to better things. It's the end of a chapter for me. I have so many opportunities open to me, and I feel so hopeful. I can do so much!

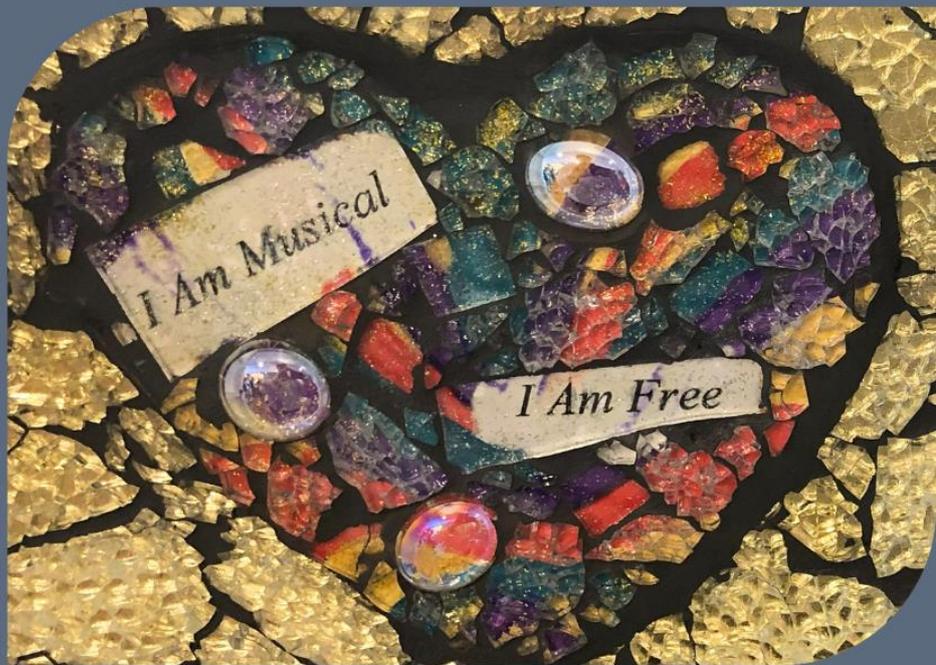
## What do you think made the changes come about?

Mission Gallery were so friendly and welcoming. Going in a group helped me feel confident.

They changed my view of galleries – I used to think that that they are stuck up and not for me. I have gone into other galleries since and feel that these places are for me. It's opened my eyes to what is out there and what I can go to.

I couldn't have done it without the support of Crisis.

## Give a Little Bit of Life



### Background to my story

I'm Todd. I come to these sessions most weeks. I am originally from California. I have a daughter – 12 and a son – 15.

I had a breakdown in 2018 and had to stop working because of depression and anxiety. During COVID I lost my grandmother (back home) and couldn't go to her funeral. We were really close. I also lost my Mom soon after and found out on my birthday.

I got divorced in 2021, and then I became homeless. The divorce has been difficult and I do not have a good relationship with my ex-wife. Crisis have been incredibly supportive of me, helping me with everything and literally saved my life.

## What changes have come about as a result of being part of the Mission Gallery art sessions?

- I feel excited
- This gets me out of the house
- I feel better
- I like to bounce ideas off the others
- I am more relaxed
- I feel more focused
- I feel a sense of accomplishment after the sessions
- It feels good to be good at art
- I am hopeful for future – about maybe going to university!
- I feel like an artist
- My stuff – my art – is looking cool
- I feel less depressed – this is keeping me out of my funk

## Which one of these changes is the most significant to me and why?

I am dyslexic so feeling good enough to go to University is huge for me. This wasn't something that I thought was open to me before. I am an artist!

## What it was like before?

I felt depressed, stuck, wanted to stay in the house all the time. I felt I would self-harm. I felt I wasn't worth much, like what's the point?

## What it is like now?

I remember my Great-grandmother baking delicious cloud cookies and doing pottery with me – I love pottery and it makes me happy to do it and feel good at it. I have made a tribute piece for my Great-grandmother. I feel I am developing a style – my stuff is cool!

This is exciting!

I had a look around the University and it was like a toybox! I wanted to get my hands on all the toys and materials and make stuff. I never would have thought I could have a Masters!

## What do you think made the changes come about?

Without the sessions I would never have thought of doing a university course – or have felt like an artist. I think it is the confidence I gained.

I feel better – less depressed because I have this goal. I have these relationships in the group and sessions to come to.

This has saved my life.

I have something to look forward to. I am excited!

# The Mosaic Story



## Background to my story

I am Emma, and I am 25. I am originally from Essex. I came to Swansea to be with my partner. I like Swansea – it's quiet. I have a cat who is 2 years old called Gracie. I love Gracie and she helps me with my mental health. I have depression and anxiety. Cats can tell when you feel down. They know how to help you.

I was raped when I was 18 and went through a really bad time with a partner who was violent and abusive. I ended up in hospital.

I found it really hard when my Dad and my Gran died. I didn't feel confident and felt like I didn't know myself – like I didn't know who I was.

Now I am with a new partner who is supportive. We are going to get married soon and I feel positive.

## What changes have come about as a result of being part of the Mission Gallery art sessions?

- I feel more relaxed
- I am less anxious - calm
- Not as stressed
- I made new friends
- I'm not smoking as much (halved!)
- I have tried different art – glass, drawing, mosaics
- I feel creative, whereas before I didn't feel creative.
- I feel more confident every time I come here
- I feel changed for the better
- I am more myself

## Which one of these changes is the most significant to me and why?

Feeling relaxed and calm – more confident and more myself. This has been the biggest change for me.

## What it was like before?

I felt stressed and anxious I smoked a lot to cope. I didn't feel confident.

## What it is like now?

I am smoking less. I feel more positive. I feel calmer and more myself.

## What do you think made the changes come about?

Coming every time and trying new stuff.

Having a chat and a laugh and making friends. The sessions have made me feel more confident and like I **can** do it.

It's like a mosaic – like something broken that is put back together to make something better.

These stories illustrate the huge impact of the project on these individual's lives. Many of the Crisis members spoke to us about deeply traumatising experiences which left them feeling depressed, anxious, alone and hopeless. The stories tell us how being involved in the project has resulted in participants feeling less depressed and anxious and how this has improved their health and wellbeing. One talks of smoking a lot less, another of no longer feeling the desire to self-harm.

All of the stories speak in one way or another about how the project has helped the participants to gain a stronger, clearer or improved sense of who they are,

*"Feel better about myself...It's brought me back to being me"*  
*"I have self-belief now and self-esteem"*  
*"This wasn't something that I thought was open to me before. I am an artist!"*  
*"I am more myself"*

In each of the most significant change interviews, the Crisis members talked about how the sessions had improved their confidence. This is not something that we specifically asked them to talk about, and as such it is revealing that each individual identified an improvement in their self-confidence as the most significant change for them.

*"My confidence. Knowing I **can** do things. Having the freedom to try new things and push myself."*  
*"I have confidence now"*

*"Without the sessions I would never have thought ... felt like an artist. I think it is the confidence I gained."*

*"Feeling relaxed and calm – more confident and more myself. This has been the biggest change for me."*

Providing this opportunity for Crisis members to work with professional artists was validating and affirming for the participants, and had a positive impact on their confidence and self-esteem. In talking to the participants they told us that being invited to work with so many professional artists, and to have time made for them in the Gallery had made them feel valued. This is an important outcome for the project as many people experiencing homelessness also experience stigma and discrimination, and, as the Crisis Report found, half of the homeless people in their survey felt that they "did not deserve help".<sup>13</sup>

Another theme that runs through the stories is the participants having the confidence to call themselves 'artists'. One of the most significant unintended outcomes of this project is that two of the participants have since started Art & Design Foundation courses at University. Neither of these individuals had considered Higher Education as something that was "open" to them before the project. Another participant is displaying their paintings for sale in another gallery and plans to start selling their artworks online.

The improvements in the self-confidence felt by the participants is not just related to their ability to create art, but extends into their lives, future plans and relationships.

*"I have plans for the future – which I didn't before. I have options and choices."*  
*"I am dyslexic so feeling good enough to go to University is huge for me. This wasn't something that I thought was open to me before. I am an artist!"*  
*"I will try anything now...I feel confident and supported to take risks and for things to not go right."*

The participants talked about the importance of the friendships and bonds that they have made with other members of the group,

*"Going in a group helped me feel confident."*

*"Being in a small group - having got to know each other. Building each other's confidence, Positive attitudes – no negative comments (just friendly banter!) - We help each other."*

*"I feel better...I have these relationships in the group and sessions to come to."*

*"Coming every time and trying new stuff. Having a chat and a laugh and making friends."*

The support and friendship that developed between the participants appeared to play an important role in helping them to feel safe in the workshops and to grow their confidence beyond their time with Crisis.

## 4.2 Impacts for Mission Gallery and other Cultural Spaces

The Mission Gallery and Crisis teams were very clear both in their funding application and in the project inception meeting that they wanted to create a safe and welcoming space for Crisis members to enable them to "to connect with others and reflect creatively"<sup>14</sup>.

Throughout the process of setting up the project, Crisis and Mission Gallery gave careful consideration to the design and content of workshops, ways to make the sessions feel safe and inclusive and at all stages they asked the Crisis members what they needed to make the sessions work for them.

The participants also reflected that being part of a small group was an important part of helping them to feel confident and safe.

*"Going in a group helped me feel confident."*

*"Being in a small group"*

*"Having a chat and a laugh and making friends."*

It was also clear, speaking with both the artists involved and the Crisis Members, that having the support of a member of the Crisis team at each of the workshops was an essential part of the success of the project. The artists we spoke with felt it was reassuring and enabled them to focus on the session and feel confident that the participants would be receive support, should they need it. The participants also felt that it was supportive to have someone they already knew at the sessions and this helped them to feel confident to attend initially and to continue to come to sessions.

In terms of recruiting participants for the workshops, Crisis obviously plaid a pivotal role in identifying people who might want to attend, providing them with encouragement and information, and providing travel expenses. The participants also reflected that seeing the same members of Mission Gallery staff was an important part of helping them to feel comfortable in the space. They spoke of how welcoming and friendly the staff were and about how this welcome was an important part of making them feel like they belonged in the Gallery.

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<sup>14</sup> Original Project Funding Application

Another important element which made the project supportive for the Crisis members, was in holding a collaborative information session during the project. The session was attended by the artists, Mission Gallery staff, the Crisis team and some of the Crisis members. The session raised awareness of homelessness and how it impacts on different people and the Crisis members spoke about their own experiences to the group. The session was an important in exploring stigma about homelessness and people experiencing homelessness as well as sharing the expertise brought by the Crisis team to the project in supporting people who are experiencing homelessness. One of the artists we spoke with felt that the project had helped them to challenge their own perceptions of what homelessness is and how they characterised homeless people. Another artist reflected on their own experiences and came to an awareness that they had been homeless at one time. Our discussions with people involved in the project found that it is helpful to challenge perceptions and encourage people involved to think about what it means to be homeless.

Feedback from the participants about their relationship with Mission Gallery were very positive;

*"Mission Gallery were so friendly and welcoming."*

*"I'd never been in Mission Gallery before, and I found it stressful, but now I feel comfortable there."*

*"I feel welcome in the Gallery space – such a lovely space –it is homely."*

Participants also reflected on their view of galleries and their changing relationship to these spaces,

*"They changed my view of galleries – I used to think that that they are stuck up and not for me. I have gone into other galleries since and feel that these places are for me. It's opened my eyes to what is out there and what I can go to."*

## 5. Delivery and Management

There was a productive and positive discussion between Cwmpas, Crisis and Mission Gallery at the start of the project to establish a Theory of Change which gave the project clear direction and a shared understanding of the activities and intended outcomes. The artists we spoke with all felt supported and valued during the project and many spoke of how the experience had been a positive one.

Throughout the project there was proactive and positive communication between Mission Gallery and Crisis, and the project was conducted with an openness and a transparency which made the evaluation process straightforward. The partners were respectful of the expertise and the skills that they each brought to the project. Throughout, the partners consistently included and valued the lived experience brought to the project by the Crisis members, co-producing sessions and listening to their views and ideas.

## 6. Learning

The learning from this project is extremely useful – both for Mission Gallery but also for other cultural spaces wishing to be more inclusive and accessible to every member of their community. As the Outreach Manager for Mission Gallery reflected,

*“This is a group of people we would not have been able to connect with before. Reaching every member of our community – it’s what it’s all about for us”.*

The key learning points that have come out of this evaluation:

- Forming a strong, equal and collaborative partnership with a homelessness service such as Crisis is a vital first step.
- Working collaboratively with an organisation like Crisis will support with engaging and encouraging people experiencing homelessness to take part in the project. It will also add enormous value in the skills and expertise in homelessness that the organisation can bring.
- Create simple plans of activities and intended outcomes and communicate roles and responsibilities clearly. Meet regularly throughout the project to explore progress against plans and discuss any challenges or successes.
- Work with the people experiencing homelessness to co-create workshops. This will make them more meaningful to the participants and encourage them to continue to attend.
- Involve people with lived experience of homelessness in raising awareness amongst the project team of what it means to be homeless.
- Create a safe space for the participants, preferably one to which they have exclusive access. Make the space as welcoming and consistent and try to keep the same members of staff involved as much as possible.
- Create small groups which can bond with each other. Provide travel expenses and refreshments to make the experience as ‘homely’ as possible.
- Make time to celebrate the project and show the value of the work that the participants have created.

## 7. Conclusions

The project has achieved the Arts Council funding priorities. The project is hugely relevant<sup>15</sup> as homelessness increases in Wales<sup>16</sup> as a result of pressures such as the rising cost of living<sup>17</sup> and more and more people are being affected by homelessness. The project has made a significant difference to the Crisis members, leading to a direct improvement in their wellbeing. The project is also a strong example involve genuine co-production. The open, positive and inclusive way that Mission Gallery collaborated throughout with Crisis, the artists and the Crisis members is an exemplar of positive and collaborative partnership working.

The project has resulted in valuable learning which will enable Mission Gallery to continue to change the lives of people in the community. This learning will also be useful for and relevant to other arts and cultural venues wishing to be welcoming of and accessible to homeless people.

Returning to the project's central question, "Can art act as a vehicle to counteract loneliness in those impacted by homelessness?", the evidence gathered in these Most Significant Change Stories and from talking to the Crisis members over the time we have been involved it is clear to us that the project has had a significant positive impact on the participants feelings of connection and on their ability to engage with and build relationships with other people. As the 2015 Crisis research<sup>18</sup> into loneliness and homelessness explores, there is a wealth of evidence that supports the idea that when someone feels that they are worthless or has low self-confidence or self-esteem it is harder to make or sustain meaningful relationships. To make a connection with someone we must feel that we have something to offer and that we are worth knowing.

The success of this project and the incredible impact that it has had on the individuals involved demonstrates the positive impact of art and creativity can be for people's wellbeing – particularly people who are often stigmatised and, "whose health and wellbeing has been adversely affected through poverty" and who experience "factors that can influence people's health and lead to unequal health outcomes. These are often socio economic: things such as people's education, job, income and housing conditions."<sup>19</sup>

The Crisis members involved in this project have expressed the positive impact that this project has had on both their sense of self, and on the way in which they see their place in their community. Their ability to make connections and to see themselves as having something to offer other people has helped them to feel less lonely and isolated One participant reflected,

*"This has saved my life."*

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<sup>15</sup> [https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-08/Arts%2C Health and Wellbeing Lottery Funding Guidelines 2023%5B1%5D.pdf](https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-08/Arts%2C%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Lottery%20Funding%20Guidelines%202023%5B1%5D.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/householdseligibleforhomelessnessassistanceandpriorityneed-by-area-measure-section77>

<sup>17</sup> <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/tackling-homelessness-a-mountain-that-can-feel-impossible-to-climb/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis\\_i\\_was\\_all\\_on\\_my\\_own\\_2016.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis_i_was_all_on_my_own_2016.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-08/Arts%2C Health and Wellbeing Lottery Funding Guidelines 2023%5B1%5D.pdf](https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-08/Arts%2C%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Lottery%20Funding%20Guidelines%202023%5B1%5D.pdf)

## 8. Recommendations

1. Mission Gallery to reflect on the learning from this project, share with their wider staff team and continue to create a welcoming, accessible space for people experiencing homelessness.
2. Mission Gallery and Crisis to continue working together to enable and support new Crisis members to access and utilise the Mission Gallery space.
3. Mission Gallery to share the learning from this project with other cultural and artistic spaces in Swansea and beyond to support them to become welcoming and accessible to people experiencing homelessness.
4. Mission Gallery and Crisis to discuss creating a further iteration of this project to give new Crisis members the opportunity to take part and to benefit from the workshops.

## 9. The Future

Crisis and Mission Gallery collaborated to create a successful example of partnership and co-production for the benefit of an often overlooked, stigmatised and marginalised group of people. In our view, the project has successfully achieved its aims and has generated valuable learning for the future. A further iteration of this project could continue to change the lives of many more homeless people and to support this, we have identified some potential sources of funding for the future:

### **Paul Hamlyn Foundation - [Arts Access and Participation Fund](#)**

The fund may be a possible source of future funding as the project has clear links to the fund's priority areas of addressing inequalities, co-production, amplifying different creative voices and generating and reflecting on learning.

### **Esme Fairbairn – [Community-led art and creativity](#)**

The fund is focused on using the power of creativity and culture to transform lives and communities. The fund has a strong community focus, and is looking to fund projects that bring people together and strengthening community relationships.

### **[Moondance](#)**

Moondance have a broader remit, but the project seems to fit well with their mission statement: "To prevent or relieve poverty, support the welfare and well-being of women, children, the elderly and the vulnerable in our society, improve health outcomes, raise educational standards and preserve our environment for future generations."

**[Arts, Health and Wellbeing Lottery Funding](#)** – The fund has a remit aimed at supporting successful project to 'scale' their activities. A discussion with the funder once the project has submitted the final reporting evidence may lead to further investment, given the achievements and impact of this project.

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