

Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Project: State of Flux 2.0

Organisation: Ludus Dance

Region: North West

Designed for: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

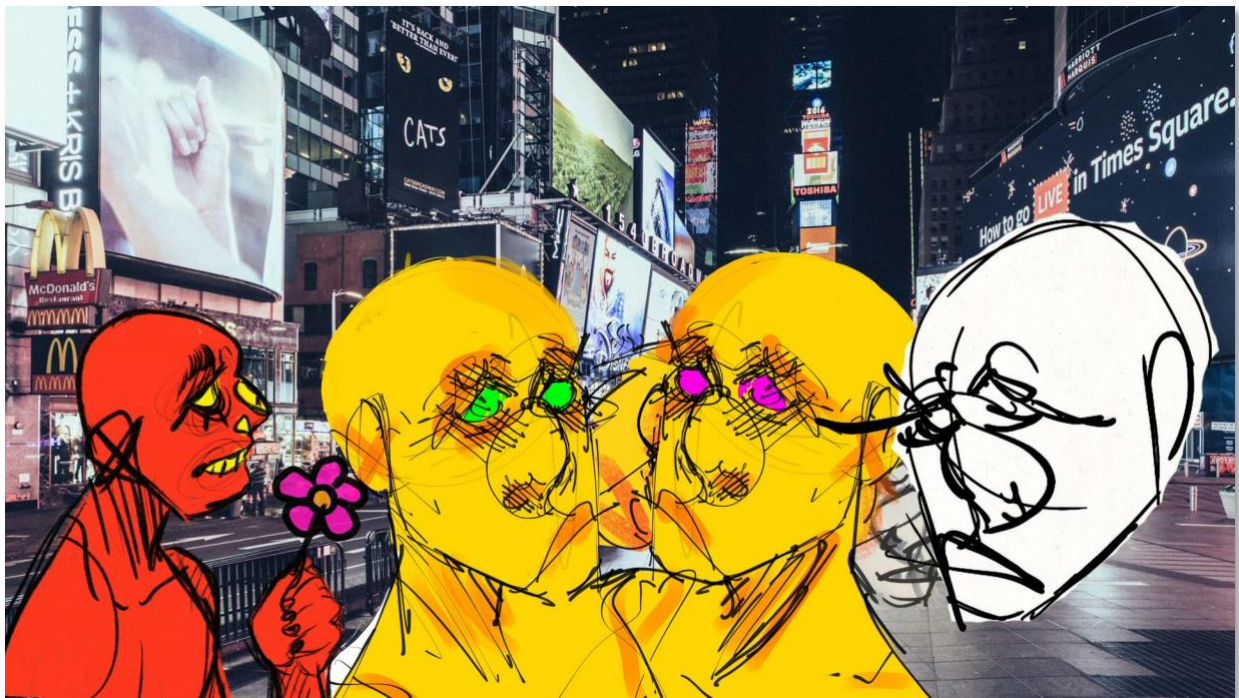


Illustration by a young person from The Cove (CAMHS), Heysham

Introduction

Funded by BBC Children in Need, State of Flux 2.0 uses the arts to support soft and hard skills development, reduce social isolation and develop self-worth and aspirations in young people from The Cove (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service CAMHS), Heysham.

Working with three industry professionals, patients from the Cove will take part in a series of activities aimed at developing transferable life and technical skills, providing regular positive pursuits that will support reintegration.

They will learn the basics of film making, how to construct short dance sequences and original sound scores to develop short films/visual media pieces.

“It helps people, boosts confidence, gets you out of your comfort zone, helps you socialise, gives you structure and routine and helps you learn new things. It gives me hope, thought my drawings weren't good but now it feels like my art can be used for something. I want to be a Freelance Illustrator and Stuart has helped me plan next steps. Gives me the motivation to continue drawing. It's good, it's beneficial and it helps people.” (Inpatient)

While this project started in August 2019, we have continued to create content for the young people at CAMHS through pre-recorded sessions on our YouTube channel as well as digital resource packs when screen fatigue hit. These packs were also distributed to 130 families experiencing digital poverty. We are now back in The Cove delivering face to face sessions which seem to be even more well received than before due to the impact of COVID-19 and we are therefore running online evening sessions for any young person struggling with their mental health.

Funders

BBC Children in Need; they gave us an original 2-year grant but they also provided a booster when COVID-19 and lockdown hit.

Partners

Lancashire NHS Trust (The Cove)

Who is it for?

The project is predominantly for children and young people, suffering with acute mental illness and admitted to The Cove CAMHS unit. We have recently started online evening sessions which are open to any children and young people struggling with their mental health.

Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

Both

How many people took/are taking part?

Around 150 children and young people in total, 100 of those have been reached during lockdown.

Where is it happening?

Face to face sessions are only for people at The Cove in Heysham, Lancashire, however the online sessions are accessible from anywhere in the country.

For how long has it been happening?

The work began August 2019 and the funding ends in August 2021 however, we are already exploring options to continue the work beyond this round of funding.

What were/are the main outputs?

We were aiming to have a sharing festival in August 2020 however, COVID-19 put a stop to this. We now hope to partner up on a sharing event called Chameleon festival which is run by children and young people working with More Music in Morecambe. We will also run a final sharing event in August 2021 (if COVID permits!). We do have a film from our first year of creations on our [YouTube Channel](#).

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Our ultimate aim is to help children and young people build a toolkit to promote their health and wellbeing for life. We do this through:

1. Developing a sense of self-agency within the young people, helping them to discover how they 'fit' within society, thus supporting reintegration into mainstream activities and improving their sense of normality.
2. Developing key transferable life and technical skills (sometimes referred to as soft and hard skill sets) enabling them to progress successfully along their chosen career path.
3. Taking purposeful steps towards providing the skills and opportunities to enable each young person to successfully re-integrate into their local community. Developing support for the arts as a tool for transformation through public sharing, advocacy and celebration of the distance travelled by these young people

Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

As described above this was an existing project that was widened out to help more children and young people struggling with the impact of COVID-19.

Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics¹?

We are working exclusively with children and young people suffering with poor mental health. This fits in with the protected characteristics of age and disabilities.

Evaluation & Feedback

We use a mixture of surveys, questionnaires and creative evaluation techniques such as drawings, words games, making shapes and creative writing. We also have a debrief with the Occupational Health team before and after each session. This gives us a valuable insight into how our project fits in with the young people's wider care plans and how it contributes to and compliments them. There's too much formal information to share here however, we have been told through our evaluation methods that we are hitting our main objectives. We know young people have been inspired to use the skills learnt to explore career options for example one young person is now exploring how they can become an illustrator. This shows a newfound sense of self-worth and a place in society. The occupational health team has told us that they are seeing quicker discharge times and that young people are engaging in more activities outside of our sessions. Every young person has told us that they have improved in confidence and that the sessions, packs or videos have been a welcome distraction to what's going on in their personal lives, whether that be the impact of COVID-19 or something else.

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"I feel Ludus has provided me with hope. I am grateful for having the opportunity to learn something new. I have gained confidence as people have taken an interest in my art work. Prior to Ludus visiting the ward I spent most of my time in my room" – **Inpatient**

"I've just spoken to the young person about the sessions – they smiled – kinda cheeky grin which was nice to see them be almost playful" – **Occupational Health Team**

"I feel they have hugely benefitted from Ludus. I've really seen them come alive. I've worked with them for 2 years and haven't seen them so absorbed in something as they are with Ludus. The real value for them is longer term engagement in this interest. They have said they want to pursue illustration, animations or film making as a career. They have asked about future opportunities in their area once discharged." – **Occupational Health Team**

"They also spoke about how much they enjoyed it. It also allowed for two of the young people to take on a more 'caring' role when they were trying to include another who was reluctant. The environment just generally feels really safe for young people to be who they want to be." – **Occupational Health Team**

¹Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equalities Act 2010).

“The workshops have inspired them to engage with creative activity outside the Tuesday session (they work away on their ipad in their room). The sessions also allow them to demonstrate their skills and talent – i.e. ability to socialise with others, kind nature by making brews, etc. It’s such a privilege seeing them develop their confidence in something so positive and see them motivated to do so. Motivation used to be a challenge for them” – **Occupational Health Team**

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Working with the CAMHS staff has been both a challenge and a success. Many of the staff had not previously experienced this kind of work so were uncertain of its worth, however, we needed their support for the sessions to be a success. Over time they have witnessed the worth of our sessions and we now have their full support. This means we are seeing even better results from the young people.

The young people often only stay in the unit for 2-3 weeks, it can be difficult to try and make change in such a small space of time. They are also discharged all over the country so we are not necessarily well positioned to signpost them to like-minded organisations if they are discharged further afield. We’ve done a heap of research to try and change that and the external online sessions have made a big difference.

A huge success is more CAMHS teams seeing our successes and realising the worth of this kind of work, how it can enhance a young person’s treatment and be a great tool for staff.

Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

We are definitely reaching more people now. We are also seeing interest from the parents of young people who are struggling, so that they can attend the online sessions and then use the knowledge to do something with their children that might facilitate a conversation. This is not an audience we had considered previously.

What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

The list is endless!! We have had to learn about mental health first aid and are about to start psychiatric first aid training. The professional artists had not delivered online sessions previously, the Project Co-ordinator fortunately had experience of this so we ran a sharing session.

Many changes in the artists’ practices have taken place, such as allowing more space in conversation and decision making. In a studio you would usually fill the time with activity but it is important to allow room for silence and pauses within this setting.

What would you say has made this project possible?

Additional funding from Children in Need and buy in from staff at the CAMHS unit were major factors in making the work possible.

I would have to say that it could not have happened without our staff passion and commitment. While the additional funding did cover some extra staff time (including time for the professional artists) it still required us all to go over and above our official commitments. We are working in a completely new way, under conditions no-one has experienced before, this requires another level of passion and commitment from all of those involved.

What would have made it easier?

As with everything more time and more money would have made this endlessly easier. It would have allowed us to purchase technology for the CAMHS unit to allow us to run live sessions online rather than pre-recorded. This would have helped the young people engage as well as become familiar with

the work and who we are. The CAMHS unit has poor WiFi so even the pre-recorded sessions were difficult to access at time, another reason for creating the resource packs.

It also meant that the open dialogue we'd previously had with the young people was completely closed, there was no contact time with them at all, even via a screen so we were being far more prescriptive in the work whereas we had always responded to the young people's needs and desires previously.

Further information

<https://ludusdance.org/programmes/state-of-flux/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SI_gE1X5X0&t=188s – first year film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5KXSx8b4uw&t=3423s> – pre-recorded session number 5
(provided as an example, links to the other 4 sessions are available on request)