

OUT OF THE BLUE & BREATHING SPACE
ANNUAL REPORT
2023/24

hoot
creative arts





Introduction

hoot creative arts are one of the leading Creative Health charities in England and one of very few Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations to receive a significant uplift in funding for 2023-26. Based in an ACE 'Priority Place' means we have the opportunity to build a more robust Creative Health sector in Kirklees. We continue to work with VCSE colleagues across Kirklees, Universities and other cultural sector organisations to offer varied and high-quality creative engagement and progression for participants at **hoot**.

Our commissioned service comprises of 2 distinct strands of activity: Out of the Blue is for those aged 18+ living in Kirklees with a mental health condition or wanting to support their wellbeing. This programme offers a wealth of creative groups and activities plus one-to-ones with experienced Creative Support Workers.

Operating this year

This year was a busy one for **hoot** – we continued with our hybrid delivery of in-person and online sessions, we delivered awareness raising sessions and we were out and about in the Kirklees community enabling more people to try out what we do.

We continue to deliver our core programme from our base in Huddersfield and Howlands centre in Dewsbury. Howlands is an important community centre of its own and during **hoot** delivery there we liaise with NHS colleagues, Recovery College staff and more.

We are aware that Covid isn't over yet – and some of our group members choose to wear masks – but with our HEPA filters and enhanced ventilation we can assure people that we are taking proportionate steps to keep safe.

Find our previous reports [here on our website](#).



The Working Together Better partners continue to work closely together including delivering awareness raising presentations such as to Social Prescribing Link Workers, Talking Therapies staff and Combatting Drugs Partnership.

Our social media engagement soared across all platforms. We covered, and were part of, several impactful campaigns such as Mental Health Awareness Week, Dementia Action Week, Kirklees Suicide Memorial & Bereavement Quilts Roadshow, the Big Draw Festival and more.

Photos from Yorkshire Sculpture Park trip



The year in creativity 🎵 🖌️

This year, a combination of online and in-person groups diversified our offer and artforms even further, including field recordings, soundscapes, South Indian singing, wet felting, mod roc, collage, digital animation, jazz, coil pots, printmaking, Persian mandala tiles, adventure fiction, poems, prose, soul music, beat programming, loop functionality, Motown music, brass bands, reggae, ceramic houses, Chinese silk prints and Celtic singing.

We have been privileged to work with a diverse network of guest artists including: Satnam Galsian, Tempre de Carteret, Lianne Woodward, Rachel Newsome, Joe Moore, Joe Watson. Vic Cruz, Musarat Raza, Georgia Jakubiak, Siobhan Donnelly. Tara Guha, Winston Plowes, Rachel Newsome, Emma Decent, Sam Hodgson, Sammy Weaver, Ben Slack, Chris Ruffoni, Dave Jordan, Jess Baker, students from Leeds conservatoire and Sophie Russell from Yorkshire Sound Women Network plus our highly experienced resident artists Rob Crisp and Sally Barker.

Click on the album covers below to listen to music created this year by **hoot** groups.



Highlights



HERD PROJECT

Gigantic sheep travelled the borough as part of Kirklees Year of Music 2023. **hoot** created soundscapes played from mother sheep, Aina in St Georges Square for the project finale. Listen to [the album online](#).



THE BIG DRAW FESTIVAL

Our annual open workshop on the Piazza in partnership with West Yorkshire Print Workshop saw over 30 people getting involved with printing under the festival's theme 'Drawing with Senses'.



SINGING THE BLUES WITH S2R

Our music taster session for the S2R Blues Group resulted in 80% of attendees deciding to also attend **hoot's** music group. A great example of working in partnership to enhance the offer for all.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

hoot's music workshop saw 50 people strumming, stomping and clapping along at this event at Lawrence Batley Theatre. **hoot** participants also enjoyed meeting actors from Mens Talk and other partner participants.



NEW VOLUNTEERS

In preparation for the new commissioned service we recruited and trained 3 new volunteers who are ready and keen to get involved with **hoot** groups.

WOMEN IN EXILE DRUMMING GROUP

To celebrate Refugee Week and promote **hoot's** music offer, djembe drumming artist Lou Houghton delivered a drumming workshop at WomenCentre.

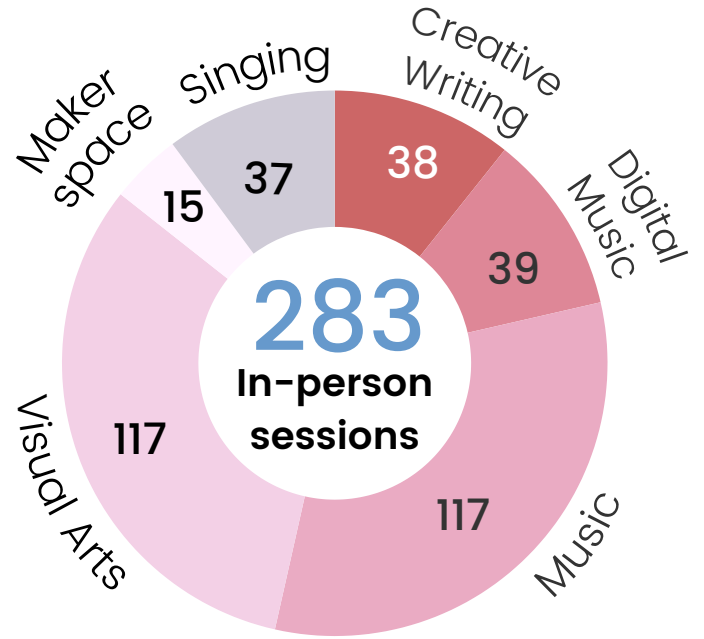


The numbers

276 people accessed Out of the Blue

 **1041** participant phone calls

 **50** welcome sessions



- 4 outreach events
- 7 awareness raising events
- 6 volunteer trainings

“ *After plucking up the courage to attend, I have now realised that getting involved with other people in the community making music, is just the therapy I need! [...]* ”

I have been made so welcome here, I'm not sure why I'm surprised. I love hoot, I think I am going to start to relax with these people and become a new person.

Out of the Blue participant

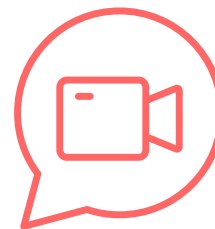
hoot from home



37 people accessed hoot from home

 **114** comments and replies

 **154** posts to the site



99 Online Sessions
28 Music
36 Singing
35 Visual Arts

26 Music
36 Visual Arts



- >419 hours online
- >1118 hours being creative offline

Creativity and beyond



Photo from Yorkshire Sculpture Park trip

Over the year we offered participants something outside of the core sessions. In partnership with Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) and Denby Dale Community Centre we arranged a free full day out with lunch and transport to visit 2 new exhibitions with a behind the scenes tour and an exclusive clay workshop run by Yorkshire Sculpture Park artist, Sally. We managed to remove the barriers people identified around visiting YSP such as transport, cost and comfort level at an arts institution and our participants had a wonderful day.



“Wonderful. I like the YSP, never been before. I feel calmer after doing this today. It's made me very happy.”

“I loved it, it made me so happy. The staff are lovely and I would love to come again. It has given me peace and happiness”

We worked in partnership with Community Rail Lancashire and Northern Rail to offer Try the Trains: a 6-part series of workshops – a mix of planning workshops at **hoot** and train trips to Penistone, Halifax and Hebden Bridge - designed to build confidence in train travel, particularly developed for those who find independent travel anxiety-provoking. Feedback suggested that this practical, sensitive and graded approach helped people feel more confident about train travel.



Photo from the 'Try the Train' project.

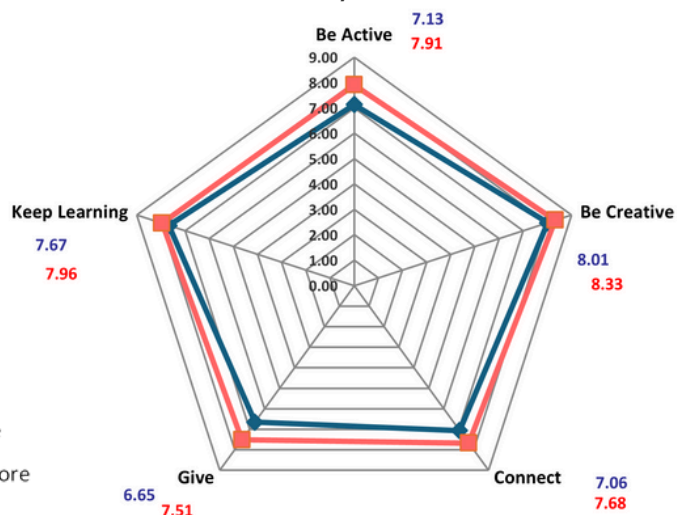
Being able to offer added value such as these projects to participants boosts wellbeing and engenders a strong sense of community.

Outcomes

Participants co-produce a Creative Arts Plan (CAP) with a Creative Support Worker. This is a discussion around someone's goals and achievements using the 6 Ways to Wellbeing as a framework (5 + Creativity). External evaluator Luminaire analysed all CAPs and the excerpts below are from their report.

Last year, it was indicated that scores were being impacted by external factors like the cost-of-living crisis and that people were still recovering from the impact of the pandemic. This year, participant's starting scores are higher suggesting an improved baseline level of wellbeing.

—●— Mean FIRST Score
—■— Mean SECOND Score



Ways to well-being

GIVE

Ways to give included formal volunteering opportunities as well as more informal ways to give back such as supporting family and encouraging others at **hoot**.

“**hoot** from home (online site) is really good for this, for example, commenting on other people’s art they post”

BE CREATIVE

The role of **hoot** in supporting creativity is demonstrated within people’s comments who value the opportunities, collaboration with others and inspiration they get from **hoot**.

“I’ve started to play music at home now due to **hoot**.”

TAKE NOTICE

There was a focus on the more negative aspects of taking notice this year, such as feeling anxious and overwhelmed by noticing too much. One person also shared the challenges they have with the busyness of the modern world providing too much distraction.

“I notice too much – it makes me anxious.”

CONNECT

Anxiety and other mental health challenges can be barriers to connecting with others. However, it was highlighted that the welcoming and friendly atmosphere enables people to feel comfortable and relaxed which in turn helps to reduce anxiety and build self-confidence in interactions with others.

“Not as active as I used to be with the arthritis, but **hoot** gets me out of the house and I’m active by my travelling to **hoot** and playing music and singing.”

KEEP LEARNING

Opportunities, motivation, and inspiration were described by people in their comments as key to helping them to keep learning and as something that they receive from attending **hoot** sessions.

“I really love to look at everyone’s work in the session – I learn from seeing what people have created and learn more seeing people’s work progress.”

BE ACTIVE

Coming to **hoot** encourages people to get out of the house and move as well as others citing golf and rock climbing as hobbies. The barriers to being more active were pain and illness preventing people from being as active as they would like to be.

“I’m very happy being in the music group, we are like a family. We are well connected, and I feel supported by the others.”

Participant Voices

This year, participants highlighted that taking part in group activities is an integral part of improving an individual's social health - helping them to be more connected and feel part of a community with notable benefits to their mental health and wellbeing.

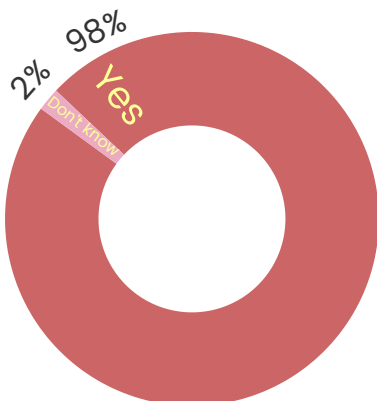
Anne said, "I feel like I have a safety net at **hoot**, never felt it before from NHS. I love the group dynamics and how the music is used to benefit wellbeing. The staff are warm and welcoming, it feels like we are a little family, this cozy warm feeling I get is important to me as it keeps anxiety to a minimum for me and I'm sure others feel this too. I don't know how you could improve this service; I think the staff put 100% into what they do."

Patrick said, "I wouldn't be here if **hoot** wasn't here, you lot have saved my life on more than one occasion and I am grateful for all the support I get. I'm grateful for the musical input to my life and to the other participants whose lives I may have helped save also. We support one another and when times are hard, we come to **hoot**, and we are there for one another. **hoot** is like a family to me."

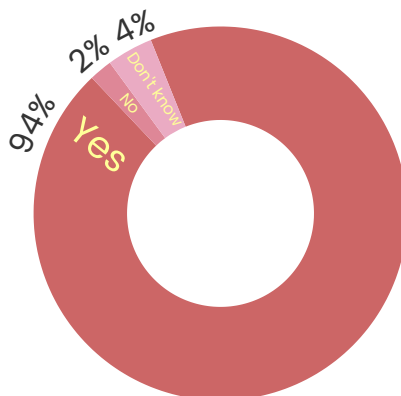
KPI highlights

An annual survey was completed by participants in order to measure the Key Performance Indicator's outlined in the service specification. The questions asked directly relate to wellbeing, community, connection and mental health with the answers being resoundingly positive about the impact of **hoot**.

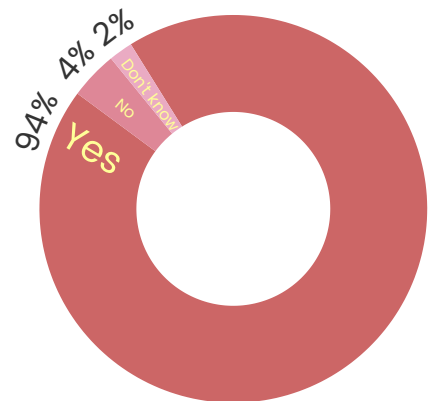
Has being involved with **hoot** this year had a positive impact on your overall health and well-being?



With **hoot** in your life, do you feel that you can cope better with your mental health issues /well-being?



Has being involved with **hoot** this year helped to reduce isolation?



Breathing Space

Estelle joined the team in the first quarter to lead Breathing Space and we formed a relationship with Memory Clinic at Folly Hall to shape available services and referral routes.

Due to the Covid-induced service break, we trialled various delivery models and partnered with others. Many previous users had declined or passed away, making it infeasible to restart regular sessions. The Batley sessions ended due to low attendance.

We developed taster sessions with Carers Count in Dewsbury, responding to local day care demand for people with dementia.

In the summer, former participants reconnected through Crafternoon Tea, where carers shared the benefits of Breathing Space.

In June, we partnered with Kirklees Dementia Hub for a young onset dementia group at Brian Jackson House, growing from 13 to 18 people, including carers. We co-created a year-long program with trips, arts, music, and movement sessions.

Later, Sally, our in-house artist, created adaptable activities for people with dementia. These were compiled into a resource called "Unlocking Creativity" for artist training.



In winter, we promoted free "Winter Tasters" to support groups across Kirklees, delivering movement, music, and visual arts sessions in community settings. During the re-tender process, we decided to transition Breathing Space/Thursday Group to a new Older People's workstream by Spring 2025.

TRIPS AND GO SEES



A chilly November trip to the Yorkshire Mining Museum, including a guided walk through the pits. The group enjoyed learning about the mine's history and appreciated the tea afterward.

CHRISTMAS MEAL



A Christmas meal at The Vulcan with the whole group and volunteers, highlighting the group's close bonds and mutual support.

ORIGINAL SONGWRITING



Musician Rob Crisp helped the group reminisce about seaside memories, write lyrics for a sea shanty, and sing together as "Salty Sea Dogs."



Thanks so much for running the sessions. It makes a massive difference to people like me

Thursday Group member



Impact

We re-examined our evaluation methods, involving participants and developing a "How's it going?" poster with a simple smiley and thumbs up/down system to track session progress and participant positivity.



20

1:1 conversations with carers at the Carers Count Carers Week Event, providing insights into their care and service access.

14

people participated in a taster session with the Living Well with Dementia Support Group at Moldgreen United Reformed Church

10

sessions delivered with dementia groups run by Royal Voluntary Service and Gwennie's Getaways in various locations, engaging 93 new people. This feedback will inform our new Older People's workstream.



Photo from Breathing Space Summer Social



Credit: Mandy

Working Together Better Partnership Development

Did you know that **hoot** is part of the Working Together Better (WTB) Partnership? We are a partnership of seven voluntary sector organisations: Carers Count, Cloverleaf Advocacy, CLEAR, **hoot creative arts**, Richmond Fellowship, S2R Support to Recovery and WomenCentre; commissioned by Kirklees Council and NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board.

We are Working Together Better to:

- Improve community mental health services for people and with people
- Ensure services are accessible to all
- Increase positive outcomes
- Enable independence and resilience
- Increase prevention and early intervention

All WTB partners meet regularly to progress these aims and this year, we have been working more closely than ever to ensure our participants know about all of the partners, so they have a wider choice of ways to improve their wellbeing.

Set up a group of peer champions to represent the interests of the service users we engage with and to help shape our service

Collaborated on joint celebrations such as the Mental Health Awareness Day Lantern Parade and publicised and contributed toward each other's events

Signposted participants to each other's activities

Visited professional referring agencies together, to ensure they are aware of our joint offer

Attended public events together to publicise the partnership offer to potential participants and other professional organisations

Developed a strategic plan to guide our future development

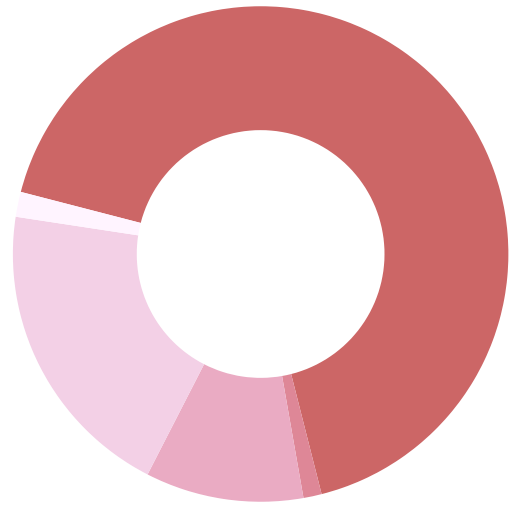


Facilitated participants to produce the quarterly, peer-led, Your Voice in Kirklees newsletter

We all look forward to building on this relationship and working together better for the people in Kirklees in the years to come.

Finance

Staffing costs (inc in house artists, other salaries & management)	67%
Overheads/General Running Costs	2%
Project costs (includes materials, equipment, Artists fees etc.)	20%
Premises (rates, rent, maintenance)	10%
Other staffing costs (travel, external supervision, training)	1%



Kirklees Council	£178,511.00
Kirklees Council WTB Roles	£9,503.00
NHS CCG/ICSS	£28,572.80
Underspend b/f from previous year	££30,293.61
Total income available	£246,880.41

Visions

We are delighted to have won the tender for the continuation of the Creative Arts, Mental Health and Wellbeing commissioned service. These are some of our goals for Year 1.

Pilot partnership working with Libraries

We have partnered with Kirklees libraries to hold sessions in their venues across Kirklees. We are collaborating on promotion, staffing and theme with many of our creative sessions due to build in reference and practical ways of using the library resources to be creative.

Out of hours sessions

We are piloting Saturday delivery in libraries and evening delivery in various settings. We want to see if there is a taste for creative activities outside of the working day and we hope to attract new participants to our service.

Closer working with SPLWS



We host a Social Prescribing Link Worker at **hoot** fortnightly who hotdesks from our space with the idea that they can become more familiar with our service and participants can become more familiar with the SPLW offer.

User-led groups

We are phasing in the idea of user led groups in our Digital Music and online Visual Art sessions as well as our Progress Visual Art group. We have chosen groups that are most conducive to working independently and hope that this initiative will boost confidence and creativity.

Out of the Blue & Breathing Space are funded by



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