



## Moving from crisis to recovery - case study

This case study may be of interest to any third sector organisation who is having to adapt and learn as they go in uncertain times.

In 2020 and 2021 Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) supported sixteen projects affected by the COVID-19 crisis to evaluate and learn about their response to the crisis to evaluate and learn about their response to the crisis. The aim of this support was to strengthen their response and their recovery, by improving what they do or guiding future plans and strategies. This work was supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Room for Art is visual art and social prescribing project run by **Art in Healthcare** providing visual arts workshops facilitated by professional artists with the aim of improving people's health and wellbeing. During the Covid-19 crisis Art in Healthcare ran this programme online. They also saw a need to introduce Art Therapy, a new service offering more intensive support for the individuals they support. Art therapy combines image making and psychotherapy to aid awareness, individual growth and address

emotional issues that may be distressing or confusing. This involved a blend of group sessions and one-to-ones. Iona, Outreach Manager, shares her experiences of using learning to recover from the crisis.

## Why did we get involved in this peer learning programme?

We were keen to be part of this programme to help improve our skills in reflection and evaluation. We were also keen to make more time to reflect on the work we've done and what has and what hasn't worked. As we had introduced a new element to our service, we specifically wanted to learn:

- What difference has art therapy made? How does this differ from the Room for Art sessions?
- What should our service model look like in the future?

## What are we learning about our work through this crisis?

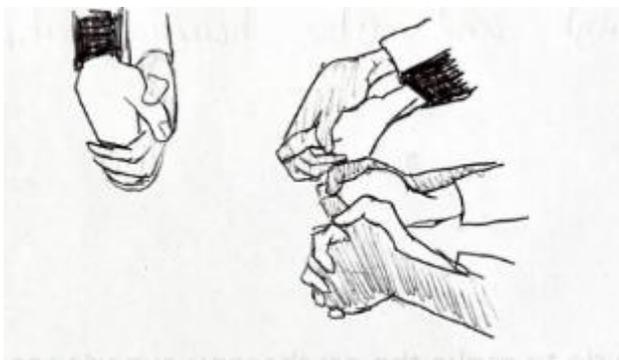
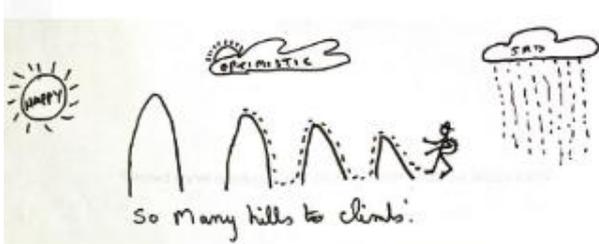
### 1) We know what difference Art Therapy makes



Our **observations** and **reflections** from ourselves and Art Therapist showed that Art Therapy helped people in a slightly different way. Through shared experience and expression participants build deeper social connections, hope for the future and a sense of community.



We asked participants for feedback using a **postal form** – for practical reasons as we were still working remotely and to ensure anonymity. We asked participants send us a drawing that reflected their experience of the therapy. The drawings gave us a rich sense of our impact.



Participants told us it has been important and useful to have dedicated time and space to explore how they are feeling or coping - many have found this hard to find elsewhere in their lives.

We now have defined outcomes for Art Therapy - some that differ from usual Room for Art workshops but some that are the same but come out

stronger for participants. Room for Art helps participants develop art techniques based on their interests, helps reduce stress and provides opportunities to socialise. Art Therapy helps people to express themselves emotionally through art, feel valued and listened to as well as develop deeper connections with others.

## 2) We better understand how to run Art Therapy sessions



Art Therapy in groups can help participants achieve amazing outcomes. However, we found that in some cases, people can get emotionally affected by what others in the group share. We **listened** to what people said and offered one-to-one sessions to help support participants through this. This also helped us maintain good levels of engagement/attendance.

We have learnt a lot about facilitating therapy sessions on Zoom – there are a lot of pros about working online but it is definitely more intense. Although we have only just started in-person, it does seem to be easier to resolve any issues and challenges in the group rather than a need for 1:1. We will be using our learning on evaluation to record this comparison going forward.

## How is this helpful to our organisation?

### Plan future service delivery

This learning has helped us to shape future service delivery. We have shared our learning with the board and are currently completing funding applications so we can continue offering Art Therapy in addition to Room for Art.

### Developing new partnerships

Now it is important for us to start to connect more with other organisations / agencies to better reach others who can benefit from Art Therapy (such as men, who tend to be underrepresented in our courses). We are working with SAMH at Redhall Walled Garden to pilot a Men's Art Therapy group.

We are really trusted by our participants and have learnt more about their lives. It is important for us to connect more with other services that can offer support that we can't.

## Our tips for other organisations

- It's not research - don't overcomplicate it, gather too much or try to answer to many questions - you are not writing a dissertation!
- Don't do it all yourself. I work in a very small team with freelancers and tend to do this. We're now building in structures so all involved can feed into evaluation
- Don't rely on your memory - we are really good at continually reflecting and observing work but conversations and discussions aren't always recorded. Making sure this is all written down at the end of each session will strengthen evidence as you can clearly see changes over time. Keep it simple though - it shouldn't take much time or it won't get done

### Contact details

If you would like ESS's support please contact us at [info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk).

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