

Evaluation of Create+

A Lime Arts and Health Wellbeing project with NHS staff off sick, returning to work or experiencing high stress and anxiety.



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Meaningful Measures Ltd

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Meaningful Measures Ltd

Meaningful Measures Ltd is a company that provides innovative person-centred evaluation, audit and research solutions. Our mission is to enable people's own voices to shape the understanding and improvement of health and wellbeing services around the world.

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Disclaimer:

The views in this report reflect those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.

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Executive Summary

There is a growing evidence base to show the benefits for engagement with art and culture on health and wellbeing. It is clearly acknowledged that the NHS workforce are burnt-out and leaving in high numbers, partly due to impact of the covid pandemic on their mental and physical health. Retaining staff within the NHS is therefore a high priority.

The aim of this evaluation was to understand the impact of a creative programme called Create+, on staff in Manchester Foundation Trust who are off sick, returning to work after being off sick or those who are currently working but experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety.

Methods: Before and after 6 art workshops, an anonymous survey to determine stress levels, wellbeing levels and feelings about the workplace was filled in and Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing® (MYCaW®) forms completed. Three focus groups with participants and the artists leading the workshops were also carried out.

Participant Characteristics: Sixty people attended Create+ courses between September 2022 and May 2023. 49 people responded to baseline surveys, and 40 at follow-up. Job roles included a range of clinical and non-clinical positions, 85.7% of participants were female, and 69.4% worked full time. 87.8% had been off sick in the last 6 months, 16.3% were currently off sick and a further 16.3% were in the process of returning to work.

Results showed:

- **97.3% of participants rated the Create+ course as excellent or good.**
- **A statistically significant reduction in Perceived Stress Scores and improvement in ONS4 measures of wellbeing. A statistically significant improvement in participants MYCaW® concerns** was seen after the programme of 6 art workshops. The most frequent MYCaW® concern stated was anxiety and stress.
- **Participants were asked about the drivers and drainers associated with their work**, the drivers included being able to support patients and working as a team. Drainers included resources and staffing shortages, working in a toxic workplace and other negative workplace issues.
- **45% of participants at follow up felt that the Create+ programme had made them want to stay in their job** and fewer people were intending to leave their role in the next 12 months.
- **Reasons for benefitting from the workshops** included having more confidence, making it easier to return to work, having something positive to focus on, and creating a space where they could take stock and reflect on the balance of time spent at work and at home. Furthermore, participants enjoyed being able to build up friendships with other staff who could understand their situation.
- **Wider benefits of Create+** were noted by several participants who took up creative activities outside of the workshops and continued to do these after the 6 workshops ended. Moreover, many participants also encouraged their friends and family to do creative activities with them, hence providing a health prevention element to Create+.

Recommendation 1- We recommend that Create+ continues to be supported and funded by MFT and the cost effectiveness of this model of support is explored.

Recommendation 2 – We recommend that additional flexible ways of accessing the creative resources are provided, e.g., as a drop-in, or sessions after shifts to avoid rush-hour and decompress.

Recommendation 3 – We recommend that there is more publicity across the MFT about the benefits of staff being referred to Create+, to increase the number of managers referring into Create+ and ensuring all staff have equal access to the support.

The UK situation with a depleted and burnt-out NHS workforce is seriously affecting the ability of the NHS to meet target waiting times for patients, therefore:

Recommendation 4 – We recommend that data from this Create+ pilot be fed into national programmes of NHS staff wellbeing, as a cheap approach to supporting staff back to work or retaining staff in the workplace, as a preventative measures to staff who are extremely stressed going off sick.



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 National picture: NHS staff burnout in the workforce

The World Health Organization states that “workplace burnout is the result of chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”¹. It is characterised by three dimensions: “(1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; (2) increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and (3) reduced professional efficacy.”¹.

The NHS Employers Staff Survey in 2021² showed that 44% of NHS workers reported feeling unwell because of work-related stress (“burnout”) in the last 12 months. Results from the same survey in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic showed that 40.3% of people had reported the same issues. Before the pandemic, therefore, there was a serious problem of workforce burnout which has deteriorated further in recent years.

Research has shown that health care workers were impacted significantly by COVID-19. A survey by Mind (2021)³ found that two-thirds (69%) of emergency responders felt their mental health had deteriorated as a result of the pandemic. Marvaldi et al., (2021)⁴ carried out a systematic review of available evidence and found that half of all frontline health workers reported mentally illness during early months of COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff burnout not only impacts the workforce, but it can also impact patients and patient safety as described in recent written evidence by the Royal College of Midwives to a UK Government enquiry¹: “*Staff who are burnt out are at increased risk of error-making and are more likely to suffer from low engagement (lack of vigour, dedication and absorption in work), cynicism, and compassion fatigue*”.

1.2 The potential role of Arts-based approaches in supporting the wellbeing of healthcare professionals:

There is a growing evidence base to show the benefits for engagement with art and culture on health and wellbeing⁵. This review (based on 108,000 people) found that people of all ages who took part and engaged with arts and cultural activities reported benefits to both their mental and physical health⁵. This evidence also showed that the more engaged someone is with the art activities (ie. actively doing it rather than passively watching) the greater the benefit⁵. A recent large scale funding initiative has been launched in the UK by UKRI to investigate Arts-based methods to help healthcare workers whose mental health may have

¹ How can we tackle staff burnout in the health and care sectors? <https://houseofcommons.shorthandstories.com/health-and-care-staff-burnout/index.html>

² Beating burnout in the NHS | NHS Employers. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/beating-burnout-nhs>

³ <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/7246/blue-light-behind-the-mask-report-en-2021.pdf>

⁴ Marvaldi M, et al.. Anxiety, depression, trauma-related, and sleep disorders among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev.* 2021 Jul;126:252-264.

⁵ Fancourt D, Finn S. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019 (Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report 67).

been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic⁶. New courses and resources will be co-designed based on the findings from this work.

1.3 Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust's Lime Arts and Health Wellbeing project "Create+"

The Lime organisation was formed in 1973 and is based within Manchester University's NHS Foundation Trust (MFT). Lime is an award-winning arts and health group which has a global reputation for delivering excellent creative projects in community health care and hospital settings. Lime enables artists to collaborate and form partnerships with researchers, arts schools, creative organisations, theatre companies and even broadcasters such as the BBC. Lime hosts many arts projects supporting the patients within the local community. Lime also has developed Create+ as an initiative to support MFT staff. Create+ was launched in September 2022 and aims to provide MFT staff with access to the arts to improve self-care, wellbeing and resilience at work. See overview video from the Create+ team: <https://vimeo.com/762228373>

Create+ consists of an informal six-week workshop programme, based in the Lime Studio in Manchester, where each workshop is 2.5 hours long. Workshops are run by professional artists and are for staff who have any range of artistic experience, including those with no previous experience of arts participation. Access to Create+ is managed via either MFT Managers referring staff to the programme, or staff themselves self-referring (with line manager awareness and agreement).

Create+ is aimed at three different staff groups:

- Those who have been on sick leave (exceeding 12 weeks) due to stress or anxiety related illness.
- Those who have been on sick leave (exceeding 12 weeks) with other illness eg., broken leg, cancer treatment etc, but who are experiencing high levels of stress/anxiety about returning to work.
- Those currently in work but who are experiencing high levels or stress/ anxiety.

The Create+ project aims to offer a non-medical option for staff to improve their wellbeing. It also aims to provide support to staff to better manage symptoms of stress, anxiety, isolation and depression. Furthermore, Create+ aims to improve the quality of life of staff at work and also outside of work.

Create+ is designed to act as a 'halfway house' location for anyone who might be anxious about coming back to work. Attendance is limited to a maximum of six people as this is thought

⁶<https://www.ukri.org/news-and-events/tackling-the-impact-of-covid-19/addressing-technological-challenges/arts-based-methods-to-help-healthcare-workers/>

to create a sense of community and connection in the group and allow staff to share experiences and provide peer support. Workshops are designed to be fun and provide a chance to explore creative arts participation in a welcoming environment.

1.4 Aim of the Create+ evaluation:

The aim of this project is to carry out a formal objective and external evaluation of Create+. It is important to have an independent evaluation of the work being carried out to understand what concerns people have about going back to work and to capture if the arts sessions have supported the staff, using reliable data from validated tools.

The evaluation will explore the potential benefits of Create+ on people's wellbeing, levels of perceived stress and ask about their intentions towards work in the future. The evaluation will also aim to capture the qualitative experiences of participants and also the artists delivering the Create+ intervention.



2.0 Methods

2.1 Data Collection

A pre-post course survey for the cohorts of training was carried out along with 3 focus groups to get more in-depth feedback about the course. These are described below.

2.1.2 Wellbeing at work Survey:

Per-post course data was collected via the Alchemer online survey platform. Questions were designed by the researchers and presented as a weblink for participants to click on and fill out (invited by an email from the training delivery main point of contact). Surveys were taken at the beginning of the first workshop and at the end of the last workshop. Questions related to who the participants were, self-rated stress levels using the Perceived Stress Questionnaire, what drives or drains them at work, their experience of Create+, and how they feel about their workplace. Due to the nature of the questions and the desire for honesty from the participants, the surveys were anonymous.

A selection of measures was chosen to capture the views of staff attending Create+. These measures captured people's main concerns, their experience and to their levels of stress and wellbeing. The following measures were therefore used.

- **Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing® (MYCaW®)** This is an individualised outcome measure used for evaluating holistic and person-centred approaches to supporting people. It is a short, validated tool that can be routinely incorporated into a consultation to see where a person most wants support. MYCaW® collects concerns which are then rated on a 0 to 6 scale of severity. Wellbeing is also recorded on a 0 to 6 scale of severity.
- **Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing (MYCaW®) for Work-based Wellbeing**⁷. This validated tool captures the concerns of participants (which are useful to be aware of as an employer). The tool asks what drives and drains participants in the workplace (this data is qualitative). This data enables leadership teams to understand what issues are priorities to address and what is working well.
- **Perceived stress scale (PSS)**⁸ – this is a short, 10 item measure of stress, which can be scored and given as a pre-post comparison. The PSS statements with a five-point scale from 'never' to 'very often' to assess stress levels in young people and adults aged 12 and above. PSS measures stress in terms of whether a person has perceived life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloading over the previous month. The total score from the PSS is added up to give the overall measure of perceived stress. See appendix for the questions asked.

⁷ See www.meaningfulmeasures.co.uk for further details about MYCaW®. Paterson C, Thomas K, Manasse A, Cooke H, Peace G. Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing (MYCaW®): an individualised questionnaire for evaluating outcome in cancer support care that includes complementary therapies. *Complement Ther Med*. 2007 Mar;15(1):38-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2006.03.006>

⁸ Cohen S, Kamarck T, Mermelstein R. A global measure of perceived stress. *J Health Soc Behav*. 1983 Dec;24(4):385-96. PMID: 6668417.

- **ONS4⁹** – this validated questionnaire captures personal well-being using four measures (often referred to as the ONS4), which capture three types of well-being: evaluative, eudemonic, and affective experience. The questions are given, and a 0 to 10 response is recorded ONS4 questions are listed in the appendix.
- **Open questions** were designed by the researchers with three questions asking about current happiness with job, and intention to leave. Five follow-up questions at 6 months asked about satisfaction with and perceived impact of the SPLW clinical supervision.

2.1.3 Focus groups:

Attendees were invited to take part in focus groups to gather more data on the experience of the Create+ course and its impact on wellbeing. Potential participants were identified by staff at Lime and provided with an information sheet about the focus group and a consent form to sign (see appendix A). Informed consent was received from all participants prior to taking part in the focus groups.

The two focus groups with a total of 9 attendees were held virtually in February and May 2023 and each lasted for one hour. Attendees were a mix of people currently off work and those still in work. An additional focus group was held in April 2023 with the two artists who had run the Create+ sessions also lasting one hour. All focus groups were recorded using Google meet and a transcript was generated automatically. In addition to the above an impact testimonial from one Create+ client was also provided by the Create+ team.

2.2 Data analysis

Where quantitative data was collected, the frequency of responses were analysed and where applicable, the average difference before and after the training was calculated. Where open questions were asked and short amounts of qualitative data were provided, this was analysed by content analysis to identify the main themes.

Transcripts from the focus groups were cleaned and anonymised to ensure no participants were identifiable prior to analysis. Researchers thoroughly familiarised themselves with the data before analysing it based on an adapted qualitative framework approach set out by Gale et al. (2013)¹⁰, to identify main themes and findings.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

All data collected by Meaningful Measures Ltd was stored in password protected, encrypted files in an agreed, secure, GDPR compliant cloud-based storage location. No data files were stored on individuals' laptops, instead, all data is stored on cloud-based storage. Meaningful Measures Ltd staff are also trained in GDPR compliant data processing procedures. Informed consent was gained for everyone who took part in a focus group.

⁹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/personalwellbeingsurveyuserguide>

¹⁰ Gale NK, Heath G, Cameron E, Rashid S, Redwood S. Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. *BMC Med Res Methodol.* 2013 Sep 18;13:117. doi: 10.1186/1471-2288-13-117. PMID: 24047204; PMCID: PMC3848812.

3.0 Results

Sixty people attended Create+ courses between September 2022 and May 2023. In this section, data from the survey, MYCaW[®] and focus groups will be presented to provide a thorough understanding of how participants felt about the Create+ course, how they felt about their workplace and how their wellbeing was impacted by Create+.

3.1 Survey participant characteristics:

This group was sampled from all the possible attendees of the Create+ courses between September 2022 and May 2023 dates. 49 people responded at baseline, and 40 at follow-up. As all survey responses were anonymous, we can't match responders at follow up, hence have presented the demographics at each timepoint. Table 1 below shows the demographics and role details collected for the baseline and follow-up groups (yellow highlight indicates the highest proportion of answers):

Demographic	Response	Baseline N= 49 (%)	Follow-up N = 40 (%)
Gender	Male	7 (14.3%)	5 (12.5%)
	Female	42 (85.7%)	35 (87.5%)
Age (years)	20-29	9 (18.4%)	6 (15.4%)
	30-39	9 (18.4%)	5 (12.8%)
	40-49	16 (26.5%)	12 (30.8%)
	50-59	18 (36.7%)	16 (41%)
Working hours	Full-time	34 (69.4%)	26 (65%)
	Part-time	15 (30.6%)	14 (35%)
Professional role	Nursing roles	18 (36.7%)	15 (37.5%)
	Other practitioners (eg. play therapist)	12 (24.5%)	10 (25%)
	Manager	4 (8.2%)	2 (5%)
	Administrator/ researcher	8 (16.3%)	7 (12.5%)
	Unspecified	6 (12.2%)	7 (17.5%)
	Doctor	1 (2%)	1 (2.5%)
Average length of time in role		7 years 10 months Range: 4 months - 33 years	8 years 8 months Range: 6 months - 33 years
Working status	Off work	8 (16.3%)	5 (12.8%)
	Returning to work	8 (16.3%)	4 (10.3%)
	Currently working	33 (67.3%)	30 (76.9%)
Absence due to sickness in the last 6 months?	Yes	43 (87.8%)	30 (75%)
	No	4 (8.2%)	10 (25%)
	Prefer not to say	2 (4.1%)	0
Average number of days absent		87.8 days Range: 2 - 360 days	65.6 days Range: 2 - 396 days

Table 1. Demographics and role details for the staff attending Create+. Highlighted yellow data shows the modal responses.

Table 1 shows that the modal participant at baseline and follow-up was female, aged 50-59 years worked full-time, in a nursing role, with average length of time in role being 7 years 10 months (baseline) or 8 years 8 months (follow-up). The modal respondent was also currently working, and if they had been absent in the last six months had taken on average 87.8 days (baseline) or 65.5 days off work (follow-up).

Focus group participants – were a mix of staff who were currently signed off work and those still in work. Eight were female and one was male, and they had a mixture of clinical and non-clinical roles. One of the artists who ran the Create+ sessions came from an educational background before moving into commissions and social engagement in galleries and museums including the Liverpool Tate gallery as well as galleries in Manchester and Newcastle. The other artist had a background working in medical narratives and patient storytelling through artwork, based either in hospitals or other healthcare settings including Maggie’s cancer centres, as well as in museums and galleries around Manchester.

3.2 Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing (MYCaW®)

MYCaW® data was completed by 44 participants at baseline and at follow-up. Participants were asked to state their two key concerns and rate them on a 0 to 6 scale (with 0 being “not bothering me at all” and 6 “bothers me greatly”). A total of 82 concerns were reported (with respondents able to give one or two concerns), six of which were either blank answers or said “N/A” to the second concern question.

The types of concerns reported are shown in Table 2 below.

Concerns (N= 82 from 44 people):	No. of responses	% of sample	Examples of concerns stated
Anxiety and Stress	33	40.2	<i>“I have been experiencing feelings of stress and anxiety due to a work-related issue.”</i> <i>“Feeling anxious, unsafe and nervous to attend work”.</i>
Relaxation (including time for self)	9	11.0	<i>“To be in safe space, relaxing and supported”.</i> <i>“Relaxation when emotionally drained”</i>
Workload (including feeling overwhelmed)	5	6.1	<i>“Dealing with feeling overwhelmed.”</i> <i>“Do less”</i>
Self-esteem	5	6.1	<i>“Improving feeling of self-worth/achievement”.</i>
Focus and concentration	4	4.9	<i>“Being able to stay focussed while I’m working (concentration)”</i>
Confidence	4	4.9	<i>“Better self-confidence”</i> <i>“Losing confidence”</i>
Depression and low moods	4	4.9	<i>“Low mood = about what?? Unsure”</i> <i>“Depression”</i>
Bereavement	2	2.4	<i>“Overcoming the loss of my dad”</i>

			<i>“Double bereavement”</i>
Energy (including tiredness)	2	2.4	<i>“I struggle with my tiredness massively - causing me to feel sick and have pains in my body”</i>
Trauma	2	2.4	<i>“Helping me through a traumatic time in my life”</i>
Others- issues experienced in or related to the workplace.	12	14.6	<i>“Not being able to leave upsetting things at work”</i> <i>“Not good with maths/ spelling”</i> <i>“over-stimulation and lack of understanding of my neurodiversity in my workplace”</i> <i>“asking for help when I need it”</i> <i>“I feel my patience has 'ebbed' making me more snappy”</i>

Table 2. The MYCaW® concerns of Create+ participants with example quotes

By far the most frequent concern (40.2%) related to anxiety and stress, which may be expected due to the cohort of people not able to work due to stress. Several participants (11%) expressed concerns related to relaxation (or lack of it). 6.1% had concerns about workload and feeling overwhelmed and 6.1% of concerns were about self-esteem. 14.6% of concerns were about other issues which could not be easily grouped due to the relatively small data set.



3.2.1 How severe were the MYCaW® concerns?

The MYCaW concerns were scored at the beginning of the first workshop and end of the last workshop and substantial improvements in scores were detected. Baseline Concern 1 and concern 2 showed an average score of 5.1/ 6, and 5.0/6 respectively, showing concerns were experienced as severe. On average, all concerns reduced in their severity at follow-up, which

shows that people’s concerns reduced in terms of how much they bothered people by the end of the set of workshops.

Participants’ wellbeing was assessed by the question “How would you rate your general feeling of wellbeing now?” with 0 representing “As good as it could be” and 6 representing “As bad as it could be as it could be”. A score of 3.9/6 was found at baseline. Wellbeing at follow up was 2.2/6 which shows a -1.7 improvement score. Compared to other datasets, this is a large improvement in wellbeing scores. The profile averages out the concerns and wellbeing scores and showed a large reduction in score from 4.6/6 points at baseline to 2.3/6. See Figure 1 below with the MYCaW® scores.

All of the participants improved -0.5 or more on the score change, indicating that all people made an improvement that was over the minimal important difference for MYCaW®. Parametric repeated t-test score comparing baseline to follow up means found that there was a significant improvement for Concern 1 $t(44) = -10.9, p < 0.001$, Concern 2 $t(44) = -11.2.5, p < 0.001$ and Wellbeing $t(44) = -6.5, p < 0.001$. Therefore, this small sample of data indicates that there is a significant improvement in participant’s concerns and wellbeing after attending Create+.

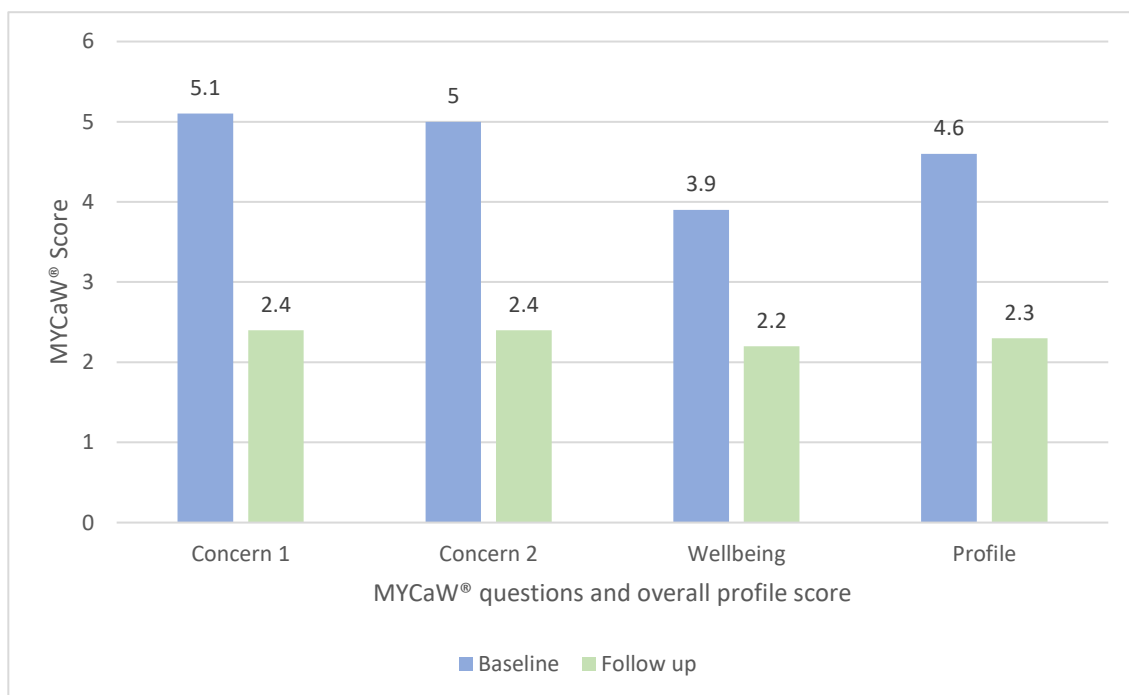


Figure 1. Mean MYCaW® scores before and after Create+. A reduction in score denotes and improvement.

3.3 MYCaW® Drivers and Drainers

The MYCaW® for workplace wellbeing questions asked Create+ participants to identify their ‘drivers’ or what lifts them up and work and ‘drainers’ which drain their motivation at work.

This survey was anonymous, and the answers to this question hopefully provide a candid insight into how people feel about their workplace. (Note, two people did not provide an answer to the Driver 1 or Driver 2 questions).

Drivers (N= 94 from 47 people):	Freq of responses	% of sample	Examples of Driver stated
Supporting Patients	44	45.4	<i>“Helping patients”</i> <i>“Making patients happy”.</i>
Work as part of a team	16	16.5	<i>“Supportive team”</i> <i>“Working in teams”</i>
Other drivers (see below for details)	31	33.0	<i>“Feelings of confidence”, “using imagination”, “maintaining high standards”, “perfectionism”, “developing better knowledge”, “innovation”, “learning”, “kindness”, “self-satisfaction”, “procedures”, “safety”, “ambition”, “passion for the job”</i>
Money	3	3.1	<i>“Getting paid”</i> <i>“Money”</i>

Table 3. Frequencies of Stated “Drivers” for the participants

94 responses to the ‘drivers’ question were received, and two themes clearly emerged (see Table 3).

- The most frequent driver (45%) was related to helping, caring for and providing good results for patients
- Working as part of a team, with other staff and colleagues and being supported in a team accounted for 16% of the responses.
- There were a range of other comments (33%) made but these didn’t fall into discrete categories or themes.

In contrast, data about the ‘Drainers’ at work is reported below (Table 4). 87 comments were received from 49 participants. Five people did not provide an answer to Drainer 1 and six to Drainer 2).

Drainers (N= 87 from 44 people’s responses):	Freq of responses	% of sample	Examples of Drainer stated
Resource issues (short staff, too much work, high workload, staff	27	31.0	<i>“Overwhelming amount of work”, “Short staffed”, “High workload”, “Too much to do”, “Too much work at once” “Unrealistic expectations, “Long days, and “Lack of staff”.</i>

shortage, too much to do)			
Toxic workplace (office politics, negativity, other people complaining, criticism, blame culture)	26	30.0	<i>“Not getting on with people”, “Negativity”, “Staff morale”, “Hierarchy and politics”, “Lack of enthusiasm”, “Blame culture”, “Pessimism”, “Negative people”, and “Toxic culture”.</i>
Negative work-related issues	24	27.6	<i>“Too much noise”, “Lack of change”, “Shouting”.</i> Related to the work environment were examples of not feeling valued were: <i>“Not feeling appreciated and valued”</i> and <i>“Not being valued”</i> and issues with bureaucracy include: <i>“Long paperwork”,</i> systems being <i>“Disorganised”</i> and just stating the issue of <i>“Bureaucracy”.</i>
Physical health issues	5	5.7	<i>Back pain”, “Illness”</i> and mental health issues experienced e.g., <i>“Anxiety”, “My mental health”.</i>
Other (miscellaneous)	5	5.7	e.g., <i>“Death”</i> (presumably bereavement) and <i>“Personal life”</i>

Table 4. Frequencies of Stated “Drainers” for the participants

There were three clear themes that emerged which are described below.

- The most frequent demotivating comment (31%) related to “Resource issues” which predominantly related to two distinct aspects - being short staffed and having a high workload or too much work to complete.
- The next most frequent drainer (30%) was the feeling that staff were working in a toxic workplace. Issues raised related to office politics, negativity and complaining from colleagues, criticism and a blame culture.
- The third most common theme was “Negative work-related issues”; 25 drainers (27.6%) were comments relating to this category which described problems or difficulties with the work environment.
- 5 (5.7%) comments related to physical/health issues which the individual was experiencing.
- The remaining 5 (5.7%) comments were related to a range of issues, but these didn’t fall into discrete categories.

3.4 Perceived Stress levels

Participants were asked to score the items on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) before and after attending Create+ to gain a snapshot of stress levels. 49 participants scored at baseline and 40 at follow-up. An average score was calculated at each time point (not as matched

cases as the survey was anonymous). There is a possible trend emerging which shows an average reduction in stress levels at follow-up (see Figure 2).

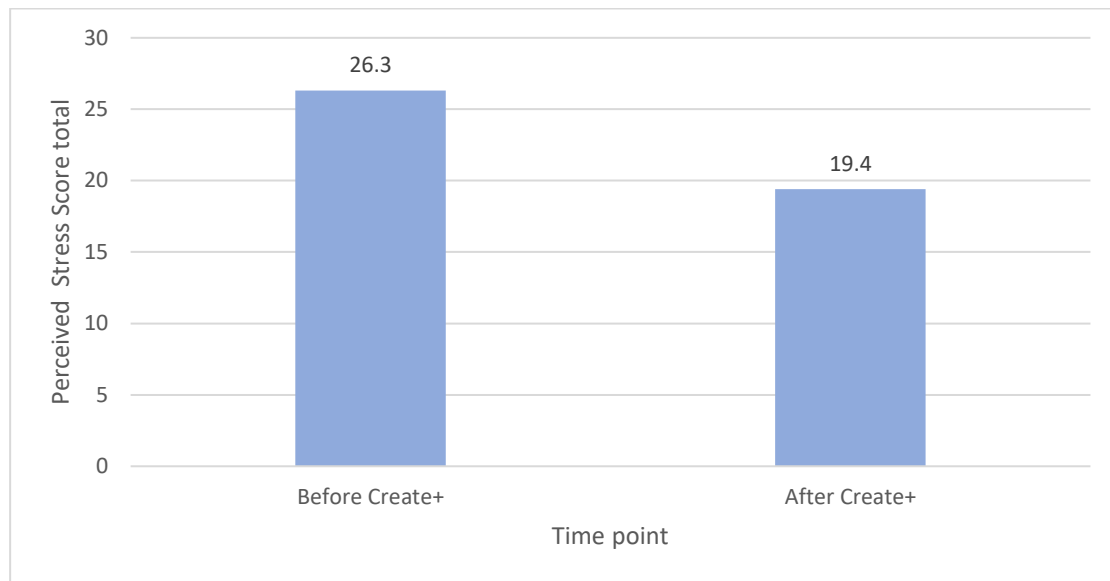


Figure 2. Perceived Stress Scale scores comparing before (N= 49) and after (N= 40) attending Create+

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) scores moved from 26.3 to 19.4 indicating an improvement and that people felt less stress at follow-up. Anonymous responses preventing matching across the samples lead to a non-parametric independent samples Mann-Whitney U test being done on the data. The result from this statistical test is that the samples are highly significantly different ($z(40)= 5.68278$, $p < 0.001$) showing that PSS scores significantly improve after the Create+ experience. The limitation of this data however is that some people have not responded at follow-up so this may be an overestimation of effect.

To further understand how the scores changed over time, the PSS can be split into Low, Medium and High scores. Table 5 below shows the proportion of scores across the different score boundaries of Low, Medium and High for the PSS.

Perceived Stress scale categories	Baseline Number of people and % N= 49	Follow-up score Number of people and % N= 40
Low (0-13)	0 (0%)	5 (12.5%)
Med (14-26)	25 (51%)	34 (85%)
High (27-40)	24 (49%)	1 (2.5%)

Table 5. Proportion of PSS score levels before and after Create+

Table x shows that at baseline, people had either medium (51%) or high stress levels (49%) and nobody was in the low stress level category. At follow-up, 5 people (12.5%) had low stress levels, and most of the high stress level scorers had moved to be medium stress level

scorers. This demonstrates that there was an increase in the proportion of Create+ participants having lower stress levels at follow up. Note, no control group was used to compare the results to, so it is impossible to attribute how much of this was due to the Create + programme. To get a sense of this, we can corroborate these findings with the qualitative analysis from the focus groups.

3.5 ONS4 wellbeing levels

ONS4 questions form part of the national statistical dataset on wellbeing for the UK government, data is released every quarter and the latest available data set is October to December 2022 (see below table). 49 Create+ participants scored the ONS4 questions at baseline and 40 at follow-up. The average score changes before and after Create+ were calculated for each domain of ONS4 (Table 6).

Three domains - level of satisfaction, level of worthwhile activities in life and level of happiness- were also below national average scores at baseline. This means that on average the participants were less satisfied, less happy and felt that they did less worthwhile activities in their lives compared to the national average. All three of these domains improved over the course of engaging in Create+ workshops, to varying degrees. Interestingly, whilst these average improvements were all statistically significant, all three domains remained below the national average at follow-up.

Anxiety levels are scored in the opposite direction and therefore a reduction in score is sought at follow-up. At baseline and at follow-up anxiety levels were worse than the national average. As with the other domains, there was a statistically significant improvement in anxiety scores after engaging in Create+ workshops.

ONS4	UK national average (Oct to Dec 2022)	Baseline N= 49	Follow-up N= 40	Baseline vs Follow-up Difference	Mann Whitney U test
Q1 Level of Satisfaction with life	7.4	4.7	5.9	1.2	(z(40)= -2.8, p< 0.05)
Q2 Level of worthwhile things in life	7.7	5.1	6.7	1.6	(z(40)= -3.2, p< 0.05)
Q3 Level of happiness	7.3	4.2	6.1	1.9	(z(40)= -3.4, p< 0.05)
Q4 Level of Anxiety	3.2	6.5	5.1	-1.4	(z(40)= -2.6, p< 0.05)

Table 6. Changes in ONS4 score before and after Create+ sessions, and also compared to the national average (October to December 2022 quartile). Note, an increase in scores for questions 1 to 3 is an improvement (increase in satisfaction, feeling life worthwhile and happiness); a decrease in score for question 4 is an improvement (reduction in anxiety).

Anonymous responses prevented matching across the samples hence a non-parametric independent samples Mann-Whitney U test was carried out on the data. As there is no control group present the changes in scores cannot be fully attributed to the Create+ workshops, however, further on in the report we can corroborate these findings with the qualitative analysis of the focus groups.

ONS4 scores can be broken down into levels for each of the four questions, and this was compared before and Create+ and to the national averages (Figure 3).

3.5.1 ONS4 Levels of Satisfaction:

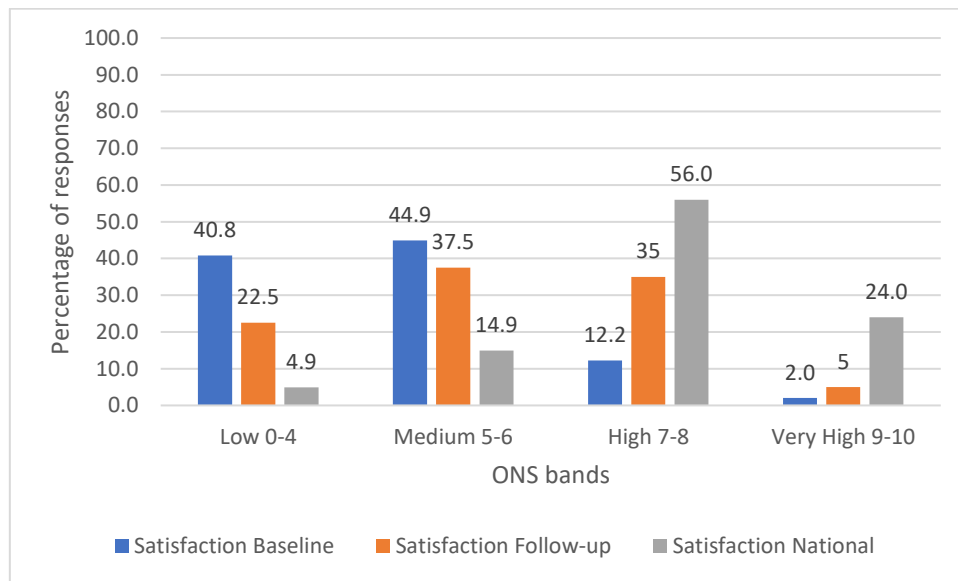


Figure 3. Levels of ONS4 Satisfaction before, after Create+ and compared to the national average

There was a shift to increased high satisfaction after engaging in Create+. The results were not better than the national average.

3.5.2 ONS4 level of worthwhile things in life:

The second question asks to what extent do you think the activities you do in your life are worthwhile. There was a clear shift to feeling that activities were more worthwhile at follow up compared to baseline. The largest increase was in the very high score (from 4.1%-25%). None of the score patterns reached the national average (Figure 4).

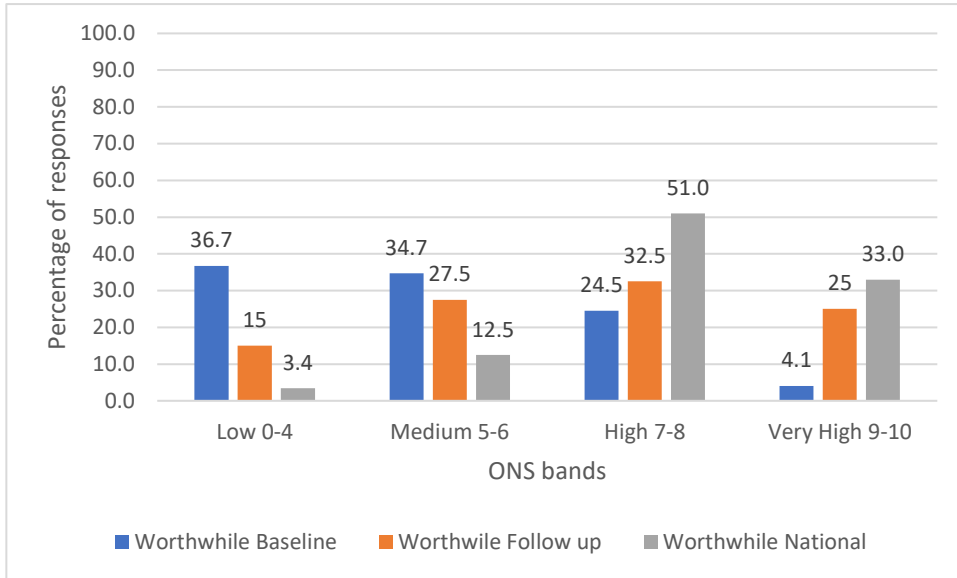


Figure 4. Worthwhile nature of activities in life - ONS4 score before, after Create+ and compared to the national average.

3.5.3 ONS4 Level of Happiness:

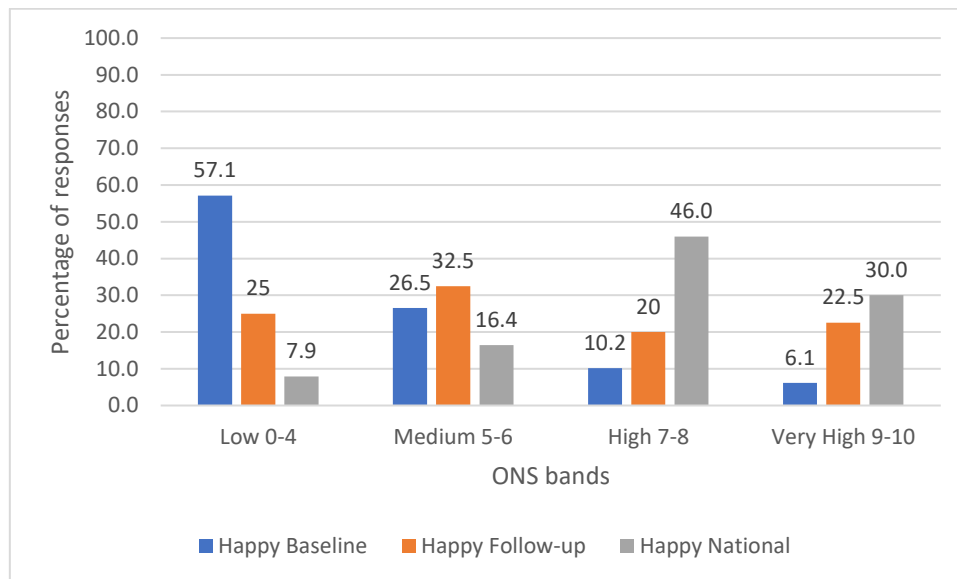


Figure 5. Levels of Happiness ONS4 score before, after Create+ and compared to the national average

Happiness levels, as with the previous domains, were skewed to low scores at baseline. Significantly more people rated their levels of happiness as low, compared to the national average and the inverse relationship is seen for the highest levels of happiness. At follow-up there was a reduction in the proportion of people with low and medium scores and a tripling of people scoring the highest levels of happiness.

3.5.4 ONS4 Levels of Anxiety:

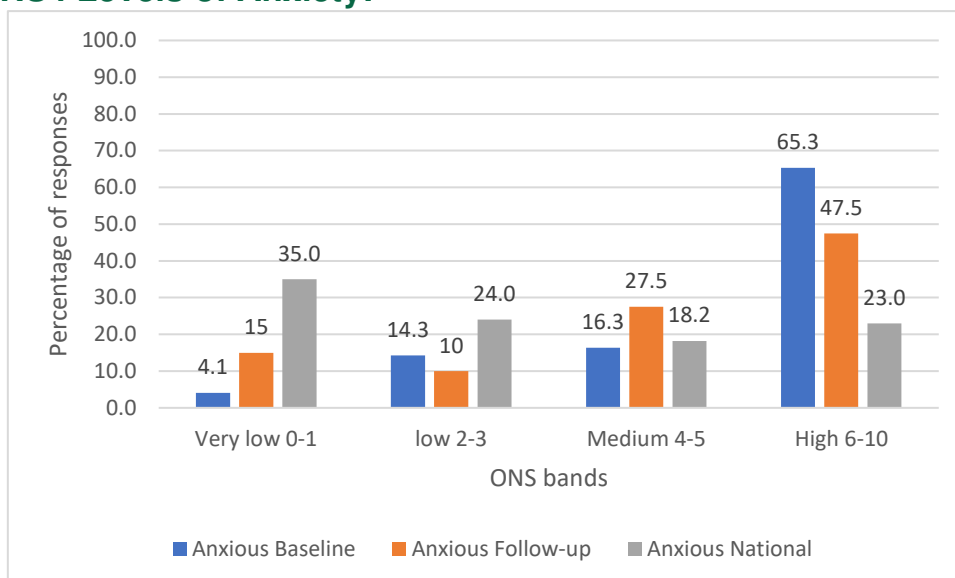


Figure 6. Levels of Anxiety ONS4 score before, after Create+ and compared to the national average

Finally, levels of anxiety were analysed. The percentage of participants rating their anxiety levels as high, was triple the national average (65% vs 23 % respectively). This reduced to 47.5 after the Create+ workshops but was still 24% over the national average. At the end of the Create+ workshops many more people (15% vs 4%) rated their anxiety at the very low level. There was therefore a shift to a reduction in levels of anxiety for participants at the end of the Create+ workshops.

3.6 Views of impact of Create+ on role retention

See Table 8 below for views before and after Create+ about intentions to stay in role. Yellow highlight indicates the highest answers.

Questions about role	Responses	Baseline N= 49 (%)	Follow-up N = 40 (%)
Are you happy in your current role?	No	12 (24.5%)	7 (17.5%)
	Yes	23 (47%)	24 (60%)
	Unsure	12 (24.5%)	7 (17.5%)
	Prefer not to say	2 (4.1%)	2 (5%)
Wish to leave role in next 12 months?	No	17 (34.7%)	19 (47.5%)
	Yes	14 (28.6%)	11 (27.5%)
	Prefer not to say	2 (4.1%)	1 (2.5%)
	Unsure	16 (32.7%)	9 (22.5%)
What effect, if any, did Create+ have on your intention to stay in your current job?	Made me want to stay in my job		18 (45%)
	No impact		7 (17.5%)
	Not applicable		7 (17.5%)
	Not sure		2 (5%)
	No answer		6 (15%)

Table 7. Thoughts on staying in their current role before and after Create+

When asked if they were happy in their current role 23 of respondents answered yes and this increased to 24 at follow up. After Create+ less people said were not happy, moving from 12 to 7. When asked directly if they wished to leave their role in the next 12 months the proportion of people saying they did not want to leave rose from 17 to 19. However, the proportion of people wishing to leave only declined slightly at follow up (14 falling to 11).

Impact of Create+ on workforce retention:

When asked if Create+ had any effect on intention to stay in the current job 45% of participants in the survey at follow-up said it had had a positive impact on their decision to stay in their work e.g.:

“Gave me confidence to give it a go again, when I was about to quit before returning” (Survey respondent attending whilst off work)

“I am reconsidering staying at my current job for a little longer” (Survey respondent attending whilst off work)

“I was in the process of changing jobs when I did the course, however, it made my return to work process much easier. I was very anxious about returning to work in an area that I no longer enjoyed but this course took my mind off that for some time and I was able to fully immerse myself in creating.” (Survey respondent attending as part of return to work)

Only 17.5% stated that Create+ had no impact on their decision to stay in their role, eg.

“The reasons I would leave are outside of Create+” (Survey respondent currently working)



3.7 Experience of Create + and suggested improvements

Most people attended all of the course (22/39)= 56.4%, 14.39 (35.9%) attended most of it , and only 3.39 (7.7%) attendee only "A little".

The rated experience of Create+ was extremely high: 29/36 (80.6%) said Excellent, 6/36 (16.7%) said Good.

The overwhelming majority consisted of people stating they had an extremely positive experience:

"You are all amazing and have been so welcoming!! You have made me feel excited about my job again and have made me get back into weekly creative sessions outside of Create+ too." (Survey respondent currently working)

"It has been an amazing workshop! Its an amazing calm space to be in where all of my worries and stresses have gone. I'd live o do it again and have recommended it to other staff members and will continue to do so." (Survey respondent currently working)

"It made me feel I could forget all the problems and issues I was having and focus on the project I was doing. I really enjoyed and looked forward to each session." (Survey respondent currently working)

Only one 1/36 (2.8%) said "Satisfactory" this last person did not enjoy the art activities as they felt they were not for them *"I have spent years as a parent making costumes for the kids at school like World Book Day. This felt just the same"* (Survey respondent currently working).

3.8 Experience of participants and artists - focus group analysis

The following section of this report provides results from the focus groups with participants from Create+ and the two artists who ran the sessions, with integration of open comments from the survey. This provides a deeper understanding of the rationale behind the workshops and how participants experienced and benefitted from them.

3.8.1 Artists intentions for the Create+ workshops

The two artists had similar intentions for the workshops, to create a safe, nurturing environment for people to get to know each other and establish a dialogue around the experience. They both felt it was important to teach something that would challenge the participants and engage them in learning a process that would be a focus while the group established. As one explained, she was unsure how fragile people would be so initially kept things loose, but she has learned across several groups that the participants are up for the challenge and whatever was happening in their personal lives, they were ready to focus on something entirely new.

In terms of the artistic approaches taken, these were slightly different, reflecting each artist as an individual with their creative, personal and professional differences. Both artists brought in the theme of identity to the activities. One artist began with a clay session where the participants made clay heads, getting them to think about themselves and the different relationships they have with others in their lives, helping the group to open up about their lives

and get conversations going. This was then followed by five weeks making masks which gradually saw the participants take ownership of the space:

“it becomes less and less and less about the process and more and more about the creative acts for the participants themselves. So, basically, for the last...four sessions I’m just getting stuff out, and letting people get on with what they’re making and just offering technical advice at that point.” (Create+ artist)

The theme of identity was focussed on by each artist in different ways. For instance, the focus on identity was felt to be central to the success of mask making, in bringing out ideas about different identities people adopt in different areas of their life and using a mask to tell a different story or take on a different identity.

The other artist began the session with activities with a technical element to help people focus on a skill rather than themselves. These were printmaking, etching and screen printing and through learning and working together the group began to open up and find a dynamic:

“...through the act of you know, demonstrating and showing good practice and then sharing good practice and failing together and then and then trying it again, little interactions were made and then and then stories kind of came voluntarily without me having to prompt stuff.” (Create+ artist)

Through typography the theme of identity was brought out with printing onto products like tote bags where the theme of identity was more ‘subversive’:

“...so that you could wear it down the shops and you wouldn’t feel embarrassed by having, you know, something that revealed too much about you. But you’d know yourself...and you’d know the hidden meanings about it.” (Create+ artist)



3.8.2 How the Create+ sessions have helped with wellbeing

As the aim of Create+ is to support the wellbeing of staff in MFT, survey participants and focus group participants were asked to explain how the workshops had made them feel and how this translated into their overall wellbeing. Three key categories emerged from the participants, which related to 'having time and space', 'connecting with others' and 'being creative outside of work hours'. Each of these categories will be explored in more detail below.

3.8.2.1 Time and space

All the participants talked positively about attending Create+ and looking forward to the sessions which helped them through the week. It was evident in these discussions and survey feedback that coming to the sessions had provided important time and space away from stressors at both work and home to enable the individual to focus on themselves and switch off:

"It's a nice place to come and switch my brain off in all honesty...like everyone, I've got things going on in my home life as well...it's just been a hive of activity, which has led to me feeling like I'm dropping the ball in both my home and work life, so it's allowed me to just switch off and...focus on me just in a completely different way...I've looked forward to sessions each week because it's just been a quiet time for me, which is really nice." (Create+ participant)

It was clear from all the participants that the sessions had been successful in improving mental wellbeing, by helping people to cope emotionally, relax and reduce anxiety:

"I have really bad anxiety because of things that was going on at home...it's really hard for me to balance my work life and my home life, is really difficult with the anxiety,...but these sessions have really helped...to just relax me a bit more." (Create+ participant)

The benefit to mental wellbeing was a combination of having the time and space away from work as well as the creative element of the sessions, helping to give a sense of perspective which one person described as having 'mental fresh air'. A survey respondent similarly referred to the 'amazing calm space' of the sessions. The lasting impact of this was echoed by another focus group participant:

"...it's just kind of having that time away and I feel like even though it's just once it's only once a week, I kind of feel that I've felt really my head's felt really light and felt like I've had a really clear head to the rest of the week...I feel like it continues into the next week. I just feel really calm." (Create+ participant)

There were many similar comments given via the survey, reinforcing the positive impact on mental health and stress reduction e.g.:

"I have found it so beneficial to my mental health and self esteem" (Survey respondent)

One artist had seen physical changes in some of her participants who had appeared 'quite broken' and low in confidence at the start but over time she had seen how much their mental wellbeing had improved, reflected in their interactions in the group.

3.8.2.2 Connecting with others

Connecting with others in a similar position was important for many of the workshop participants, and the bonds made within the group and with the artists was reflected in both focus groups and survey feedback.

Artist perspective:

The two artists initially facilitated the social connections through the different activities they had introduced, one opening up dialogue about different selves and identities, one through collaborative elements to the task such as holding another person's screen or turning the press, sharing good and bad practice among themselves. Creating points of connection around a table as well as moving around the room were felt by both artists to be important for supporting interactions and as the weeks went by they were both able to step back and saw the groups become more social and open up to others:

"...you notice interesting conversations happening at the sink or happening go, you know, by the printer, press whatever. And then this little breakout groups, That's that all adds to that safe space, doesn't it?" (Create+ artist)

Both artists had seen deeper connections form and people seeking the support of the group. One artist described this as a 'rarefied space' where doing the art activity, having something in front of you, takes the pressure off things like making eye contact, helping people to open-up. One artist was aware the participants from at least one group had connected on WhatsApp and also pointed out the value of recognising other 'Limeys' around the Trust who they wouldn't normally encounter. Both artists certainly appreciated the value of the social aspect of the programme:

"I think that's what's really important about the work we're doing at Lime is that the art is almost secondary, it's about the social activity of sitting around a table together and sharing experiences. And I think if the work that they're making can feed into that and add to that storytelling all the better." (Create+ artist)

Participant perspective:

For one workshop participant, the social aspect of the group had helped them reconnect after the isolation of being off work and get used to being exposed to other people again in a safe environment. For another participant, being in the group had helped to bridge the gap of coming into work while they were off sick and doing something with others to take their mind off things. A third participant felt strongly the social connection through the art activities, was key to the positive impact experienced:

"I think the art is like a catalyst or an enzyme that allows you to talk about your issues and we formed quite a strong little bond, we talk to each other and you know we share our feelings and started to talk to each other out of the actual sessions. And so for me, that's the most important bit...It's being able to talk to other people about various bits and pieces that you're dealing with and...we empathise with each other." (Create+ participant)

Interestingly, one participant felt it was the transient nature of the social relationships which had been releasing, bringing less pressure and this was echoed by one of the artists too, who saw the value of working with strangers:

"...there's something very special, I think, about conversations that can happen with strangers. Because...the pressure's off in terms of...what this is going to lead to, what this conversation might trigger, but with people who you don't know, then you know, it's a bit easier, I think to get things out" (Create+ artist)

One participant commented that sharing, talking and helping each other had caused them to let go of being judgemental and holding negative opinions, reducing their self-doubt. In one case, a participant shared how the group sessions had been a transforming experience of feeling included and able to be themselves which was felt to be lacking in their work:

“It was generally accepted we were bringing our authentic selves to the table. And as such we had a voice, we could explore our thoughts and feelings.” (Create+ participant)

3.8.2.3 Impact on creativity outside of the sessions

Seven participants in the focus groups talked about how Create+ had reignited a connection with creativity leading to engagement in former hobbies and interests such as embroidery, painting and drawing activities, as well as creative writing and poetry. These activities were clearly providing enjoyment for their own sake but being absorbed in something and not thinking about other things was also recognised for its therapeutic value:

“...just sometimes you need that time for yourself to be artistic because it's like another version of therapy isn't it? ...It just makes you feel so much better, it's very different from going to work or in your day-to-day things in life.” (Create+ participant)

As well as creative hobbies being seen as a route to relaxation and better mental health, these kinds of activities were also helping to change routines for some people and for three people this had had quite a profound impact. One person explained that they were now doing something creative each day after work and this had made them feel like they were actually living more of a life and doing something for themselves rather than doing nothing after the end of the working day; similarly for this participant the impact was felt across their life:

“I'd get up, I'd go on the bus, I'd come to work and then I'd go home, you know? And I was just stuck in this routine where I couldn't like spread out or express myself or go off and do something with a hobby, you know it just really freshened up the opportunity to get out of that's routine that's just made me feel quite...stifling or suffocating...I think that's just the great plus, it's just been able to break that routine in a good way and the best way, you know, for me.” (Create+ participant)

This provides a degree of corroboration with the improvement in ONS4 scores that were described in section 3.

One person explained how making time for creativity as a result of Create+ had led to a permanent change in how they viewed themselves and their time:

“You think there's no way in the world I could factor something in for me. And now, you realise how detrimental it was and how you were really boxing yourself in, like, giving yourself no time at all. Unless it was for the purpose of somebody else. And so a little bit, it's freeing in that way because you think it's impossible...but it's not sensible to live that way and you do need to take time for yourself and not make it sort of every three months when you go out with your friends, but do something that's creative and doesn't have any, there's no great stakes...just do it.” (Create+ participant)

Feedback from the survey further suggested the sessions had encouraged participants to use creativity as a form of relaxation outside work and being able to explore different outlets had changed the perspective of art as a worthwhile activity:

“I don’t have to see myself as creative in order to participate and gain something from art.”
(Survey respondent)

As well as undertaking their own activities at home, one focus group participant intended to find other art groups/classes under their own steam once the programme finished and two people had taken what had been learnt in the sessions to share as activities with family and friends. One person had developed an interest in exploring and appreciating arts in galleries and museums which they also found of therapeutic value.



3.8.3 Impact on workplace wellbeing

As well as understanding how the Create+ workshops had impacted on participants’ wellbeing, we were interested to know if the workshops had changed how people felt about coming to work. There were clear impacts on how people viewed their relationship with work as a result of engaging in art activities, which will be explored further below.

3.8.3.1 Learning to detach

Five participants talked about how Create+ had helped them to detach from work issues and change their perspective of things or themselves. It was clearly challenging to keep work at a distance and achieve a balance with other things like time for themselves or other important relationships. Work had become dominant for these staff and the stress and tension of the workplace was taking its toll. This resonates with feedback given in the survey indicating the pressure and stress of the workplace is a wider issue for many:

“I am constantly stressed and feel like I’m on a train that won’t stop.” (Survey respondent)

One participant explained how the burden of work was affecting her relationship with her child. Two other participants reflected how they were feeling pressure to check emails first thing in

the morning, last thing at night and at the weekend and feeling a huge burden of responsibility at work. For some participants, excessive workload was compounded by issues at home. Taking part in Create+ had brought valuable self-awareness which was helping them recognise and change work behaviours and shift the balance:

“So I think this has made me go, you’re one person...take a step back, you can’t, you can’t do everything. And it’s allowed me to kind of just restructure my coping mechanisms and yeah, just take a little bit of a reset button to press and take that step back.” (Create+ participant)

“it’s kind of the reality check ...I just need to sort of learn to detach myself and put value more on what’s important and valuable to me,... just coming here and having that space to breathe and be able to express myself helps...just having some mental fresh air so to speak, has just helped enormously, it’s refreshed my view of people and things and the job.” (Create+ participant)

As one participant explained that having space via Create+ to ‘step back’ had been a revelation in showing them what was depleting them and what was building them up and they wouldn’t go back to previous work habits. In another case the space provided by Create + had led a participant to reflect on their work-life balance and they had decided to work fewer hours to spend more time with their child. This person was now more able to balance things and switch off from work as needed.

3.8.3.2 Feeling more valued at work

Another theme in discussions about work was to what extent staff felt valued by their manager. Two participants explained that being given the time and opportunity to attend Create+ had made them feel they were valued by managers. One of the artists had been interested to hear people report this too, acknowledging how important this could be for the workplace as well as for mental health. One of the participants broadened this out to feeling seen and valued by the organisation. Before the programme they had felt part of a team but frustrated and not listened to by managers and at times, just a number, but being referred to and supported by their manager to attend Create+ had turned this around:

“Lime has made me feel like I am worthy. I am important, and I do enough for the hospital and I do what I do for the NHS. I think people at the top don’t make me feel like that but coming to this it has made me feel like that I should be where I am, doing what I do. I’m not just a number in, in the organisation ...I am me and my mental health, and my feelings and my time is, wherever I’m at is important. And the fact that the trust has allowed me to come here...it’s been very important.” (Create+ participant)

This person had experienced a significant improvement in their physical health since participating as well as a greater enthusiasm and excitement about their job. This was having a positive impact on work back on the ward:

“it’s given me so many ideas and like it’s made me excited to get back to the ward and be able to deliver more creative workshops.” (Create+ participant)

Another participant who felt more valued by being able to attend Create+, pointed out how this made the programme particularly important at the current time. Pressures in healthcare were at an all-time high, and they explained that this was a way to help motivate people and connect

people experiencing the same feelings, to gain support. A similar view was reflected in a comment about the value of being allowed to attend during work hours.

One participant talked of a sense of pride from seeing the Create+ artwork around the hospital, valuing the way this had been blended into the wider Trust and a greater sense of connectedness from understanding the ethos and importance of other people's creations.

The two artists also witnessed some of these positive impacts on work. One reported that 3 or 4 people had decided to transfer within the Trust rather than leave altogether and said the course had made them rethink their position and what they liked and what they could change. A couple of people did leave but that was partly also a success for them. As heard by the participants, this artist also reported:

"Lots of lots of voices saying that one of the reasons they were able to come into work that day if they were still in work was because they knew they had this session in the more in the morning my morning and then they were going to work in the afternoon so it gave them the lift to get up and...get into work." (Create+ artist)

3.8.4 Suggested improvements and ways to evolve Create+

Several suggestions were made via the survey and focus groups on how to improve or evolve the Create+ workshops, which are detailed below. Note, 13/40 survey respondents (32.5%) stated that there were no improvements needed and that Create+ was good as it was.

"I've had a great experience that I think everything was perfect" (Survey respondent currently working)

3.8.4.1 Widening access to Create+

Widening access to Create+ was a theme in both focus groups and survey feedback. Alternative formats for the programme were suggested to open up access for staff in future. These included having a drop-in version, at the beginning or end of the day which one person explained could enable more staff to attend from essential services who can't attend during the working day, or even for those wanting to avoid travelling home at the busiest time. A drop-in space for chat and creativity could enable staff to:

"...utilize the service on the way back and coming in and finding a lump of clay and going...today, we're going to make animals or...you know, have an hour, you know, we're open once a week for some free creative space...it would be a lovely thing to have access to." (Create+ participant)

"I would love to see open access to the studio allowed for people to use when they need it. I'd definitely be grateful of after work access for 1600-1800 to decompress and allow traffic to die down before commuting home. The drive is one of my biggest stressors." (Survey respondent currently working)

Furthermore, some people wanted more workshop sessions or top up workshop sessions, for example:

"I would have liked to course to have been longer than 6 weeks" (Survey respondent currently working)

"Maybe a longer course or follow up course." (Survey respondent currently working)

One person for whom the programme had been transformational for both their health and their work felt strongly that everyone should have the opportunity to take part so perhaps shortening the programme was another option to give more people the chance of getting a place. Their perception of the very pressured climate for staff at the current time highlights the urgency to find ways to expand it:

"I just wish that everybody who I work with on the ward, could have this opportunity to come and do this, even if it's not for a six week program, even if it's for like half the amount of time...I find it so sad and heart-breaking seeing how worn out and tired staff are...and it helped me, and I know that it would help other people...so many people going off sick, so many people are fed up and saying they want to leave, so many staff are leaving our ward and it's just like I wish that they could try and do this before they get to the point that a lot of people are at."
(Create+ participant)

3.8.4.2 Promoting the programme to other staff

Many participants in the focus groups felt strongly that managers could be more proactive in promoting Create+, including anyone who had themselves been put forward by a manager. One person expressed accessing Create+ as being at the mercy of good managers, so a person without a supportive manager or one who wasn't aware of Create+ might miss out on the opportunity. One person felt that their manager could help promote it to other staff having seen the impact it had had, but recognised this was probably balanced by having to keep staffing numbers up. Two people felt that management style in some cases could be more open, so when staff are struggling they are offered help and support rather than the problem being perceived as a poor reflection on the manager. This would result in more timely intervention for staff at risk of burnout:

"...you shouldn't have to hit the bottom before you get something put in place, they're just letting people fall through the net all the time rather than closing the holes." (Create+ participant)

One participant linked this problem with lack of support to a wider lack of inclusion in some parts of the organisation, of those with disabilities and others requiring reasonable adjustments. Similarly, a comment by one of the artists suggested inclusion could be important for other staff. She had had at least two neurodivergent people in each group and had heard some thought-provoking comments shared about their experiences of being neurodivergent in the Trust and not feeling valued, and how difficult it is to navigate the workplace with the particular challenges they have. The need to consider neurodiversity in the workforce is further corroborated by comments given in the survey, by staff with autism who do not feel supported in the workplace:

"I just do not feel that my colleagues understand my needs or they don't consider them as important." (Survey respondent)

The promotion of Create+ to specific groups of staff may therefore be worth considering, with the caveat expressed strongly by another participant that Create+ should not become a 'sticking plaster' for wider organisational challenges that were leading to burnout.



4.0 Conclusions

In summary, this evaluation explored the potential benefits of Create+ on people's wellbeing, levels of perceived stress and asked about their intentions towards work in the future.

The evaluation data has shown in several different ways that participants had an overwhelmingly positive experience of the sessions - The MYCaW® data collected showed a statistically significant reduction in severity of concerns and improvement in wellbeing. The Perceived Stress Scores (PSS) showed an overall statistically significant reduction in stress, indicating that the Create+ attendees felt less stressed at follow-up. Furthermore, 23 people scoring in the high band on the PSS moved down to the medium or low bands of the score, indicating alleviation of stress at the highest levels. The ONS4 data indicated that participants' scores of life satisfaction, happiness, feelings of their life being worthwhile and levels of anxiety significantly improved. Even with these statistically significant improvements it was apparent that the cohort at follow-up was still not as good in their scores as the ONS4 scores from the general population.

When asked at baseline what the MYCaW® concerns and Drivers and Drainers were, there was a clear message. Anxiety and stress were the top scoring MYCaW® concerns that people felt they needed to have addressed by Create+. Top MYCaW® drivers for staff were working for patients and providing care and working in teams with colleagues. Top MYCaW® drainers were a lack of resources available to do work with, and also a perceived "toxic environment" for staff at the Trust.

People at baseline were clearly in distress with their work stress levels, and a proportion wished to leave their jobs within the next 12 months. When asked if they were happy in their current role 23 of respondents answered yes but this increased to 24 at follow up. When asked directly if they wished to leave their role in the next 12 months the proportion of people saying they did not rose from 17 at baseline to 19. When asked if Create+ had any effect on intention to stay in the current job 18 (45% of the sample) of people at follow-up said it had had a positive impact on their decision to stay in their work. NB there were less people at follow up, so the proportions wanting to stay in work are 20% more than at baseline.

Data from the two focus groups from the participants of Create+ corroborated survey findings and revealed more detail. Create+ sessions had helped support staff members' wellbeing by providing time and space to reflect and to connect with others. Creativity was stimulated for people beyond the boundaries of the Create+ sessions themselves, with participants stating they had taken up new creative activities at home which was also benefiting their family members in some cases. People also expressed that they had improved their wellbeing because of coming to Create+ by being able to detach themselves more from work and allowing themselves to feel more valued at work.

Create+ therefore has an immediate positive impact on staff who are highly stressed at work, returning to work or off work on sickleave. Create+ also has a longer term impact for a proportion of people who continue creative activities at home. Furthermore, there is a preventative element as some Create+ participants encouraged other family members to be more creative, which is supporting their mental health as well.



4.1 Recommendations:

Based on the finding from the survey, and focus groups there are a few recommendations set out below:

There was corroborative evidence from the different sources of data that Create+ is indeed support MFT staff wellbeing and their ability to take stock of how their work is impacting their health. Furthermore Create+ has demonstrated that staff are more able to continue working or return to work after completing a block of workshops.

Recommendation 1- We recommend that Create+ continues to be supported and funded by MFT and the cost effectiveness of this model of support is explored.

Recommendation 2 – We recommend that additional flexible ways of accessing the creative resources are provided, e.g., as a drop-in, or sessions after shifts to avoid rush-hour and decompress.

Recommendation 3 – We recommend that there is more publicity across the MFT about the benefits of staff being referred to Create+, to increase the number of managers referring into Create+ and ensuring all staff have equal access to the support.

The UK situation with a depleted and burnt-out NHS workforce is seriously affecting the ability of the NHS to meet target waiting times for patients, therefore:

Recommendation 4 – We recommend that data from this Create+ pilot be fed into national programmes of NHS staff wellbeing, as a cheap approach to supporting staff back to work or retaining staff in the workplace, as a preventative measures to staff who are extremely stressed going off sick.

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the focus groups

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

Evaluation of Create+

Researchers: Dr Marie Polley, Dr Helen Seers, and Abby Sabey, Meaningful Measures Ltd.

We are inviting people who have been involved in Create + to participate in an evaluation of the project. This is an evaluation which is being carried out by Meaningful Measures Ltd. This evaluation will explore your experiences of the course to enable the development and improvement of this work.

The evaluation will involve you:

Being offered the chance of taking part in a small focus group over Google Meet. This is optional and will last no longer than one hour and will be recorded and transcribed and then anonymised.

Please note:

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- Withdrawal from the research will not affect any involvement or relationship you have with Meaningful Measures Ltd.
- You have the right to ask for your data to be withdrawn, as long as this is practical and for personal information to be destroyed.
- You do not have to answer particular questions if you do not wish to do so.
- Your responses will be made anonymous and will be kept confidential unless you provide explicit consent to do otherwise. No individuals should be identifiable from any collated data, written report of the evaluation, or any publications arising from it.
- All computer data files will be password protected. The researcher will keep files in a secure place and will comply with the requirements of the UK GDPR regulations tailored by the Data Protection Act (2018).
- Any hard copy documents, e.g., consent forms, will be scanned and kept securely in a digital form in a password protected file. The hard copies will then be destroyed.
- If you wish, can receive information on the results of this evaluation. Please indicate on the consent form if you would like to receive this information.
- The researchers can be contacted during and after participation using the following contact details,

Dr Helen Seers Helen@meaningfulmeasures.co.uk

Consent Form

Evaluation of Create+

Tick yes or no as applicable on your document and return to the person who sent it to you.

• I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
• I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
• I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
• I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
• I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
• I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above evaluation.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
• I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

-----**Admin use only** I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B: Focus Group questions

Lime Arts evaluation focus groups

Below are a few questions we would like to ask at your focus group. We will go around the group with a question. Everyone will be given a turn to speak but feel free to skip a question, if you prefer not to answer it. You can leave the focus group at any time.

We'll be talking about your experience of the Create+ sessions but we won't be asking about anything personal about your wellbeing, so please feel relaxed about chatting to us.

Questions

1. What has been the most important thing about the Create+ sessions
2. Can you tell if there are any activities you have learnt to do in the Create+ sessions which you are now doing in your own time?
3. Now that you have completed the Create+ sessions, do you feel any differently about your job or the workplace?
4. Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experience of the Create+ sessions?

Questions for Lucy and Colette (Create+ artists)

Marie - introduction to the focus group and housekeeping.

MP Can you briefly describe your professional background?

AS What was the aim of the art sessions that you ran for the participants on the Create+ programme? What do you intend to achieve with the participants?

AS How did the art sessions work out with the people, in comparison to what you intended?

Was the aim achieved?

Did people share their mental health experiences,

Did people work on their own or use the group to talk to each other

Did people support each other

Did people attend regularly, or in fits and starts

MP We are interested in your observations how people changed or didn't change, as the weekly sessions of art progressed

People's understanding of where they are at

People's relationship to work and their own wellbeing

People's engagement or understanding of the role in art in their wellbeing

Ripple effect of art - did people mention how it had changed their interactions with people at home or at work?

AS Do you have any other thoughts about Create+ that we haven't already discussed could be improved or relevant to other groups of people.

Practical issues that could be worked out

Appendix C: Survey questions

Baseline Lime Create+, the Arts and Health Wellbeing survey

This survey is to capture the views of workshop attendees of Create+, the Arts and Health Wellbeing project run by Lime, for NHS MFT staff. We really value and need your feedback. We want to make sure the workshop is delivering the support you need and gather your feedback.

Please fill in this survey on your first attendance at your Create+ session.

All responses are completely anonymous and cannot be traced to any individual, all data use complies with DPA(2018) and GDPR regulations. This data will only be accessed by the evaluation team (Meaningful Measures www.meaningfulmeasures.co.uk). Your data will be stored securely and will not be shared with any third parties. If you have any queries please email hello@meaningfulmeasures.co.uk

Thank you for taking part in this survey. It should only take between 5 and 7 minutes of your time.

A bit about you

1. **Are you:**

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

2. **Your age:**

0-19

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70+

Prefer not to say

3. **Job title (optional):**

4. **Length of time in role**

(months):

Leave blank if prefer not to say

5. **Full-time/ part-time?**

Full-time

Part-time

Prefer not to say

MYCaW Workplace Wellbeing questions

6. **Drivers:**

Thinking about the workplace, please write down two things that motivate and drive you.

7. **Drainers:**

Again, thinking about the workplace, please write down two things that

demotivate and drain you.

Perceived Stress Scale

8. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

- Never
- Almost Never
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

9. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

- Never
- Almost Never
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

10. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?

- Never
- Almost Never
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

11. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

- Never
- Almost Never
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

12. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

- Never
- Almost Never
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

13. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do.

- Never
- Almost Never
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

14. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

- Never

Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

15. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

Never
Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

16. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?

Never
Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

17. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them.

Never
Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

ONS4 questions

18. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

19. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

20. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

21. On a scale where 0 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”, overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

Additional questions

22. Are you attending this course whilst...

Currently working
Attending as part of a return to work
Attending whilst off work

23. Have you had any absence due to sickness in the last 6 months?

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

24. If yes to the previous question, how many days absent (approximately)?

(if prefer not to say, leave blank, if don't know put D/K)

25. Are you happy in your current role?

Yes
No
Unsure
Prefer not to say

26. Do you feel you may want to leave your role in the next 12 months?

Yes
No
Unsure
Prefer not to say

27. Are there any other comments you want to share about your work or your wellbeing?

Thank you for taking part in our survey

Follow-up Lime Create+, the Arts and Health Wellbeing survey

This survey is to capture the views of workshop attendees of Create+, the Arts and Health Wellbeing project run by Lime, for NHS MFT staff. We really value and need your feedback. We want to make sure the workshop is delivering the support you need and gather your feedback.

Please fill in this survey after you have completed your Create+ course.

All responses are completely anonymous and cannot be traced to any individual, all data use complies with DPA(2018) and GDPR regulations. This data will only be accessed by the evaluation team (Meaningful Measures www.meaningfulmeasures.co.uk). Your data will be stored securely and will not be shared with any third parties. If you have any queries, please email hello@meaningfulmeasures.co.uk

The survey should only take 5 to 7 minutes of your time.

A bit about you

1. Are you:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

2. Your age:

0-19

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70+

Prefer not to say

3. Job title (Optional):

4. Length of time in role

(months):

Leave blank if prefer not to say

5. Full-time/ part-time?

Full-time

Part-time

Prefer not to say

Perceived Stress Scale

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Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Very Often

7. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to

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Fairly Often
Very Often

8. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?

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Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

9. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

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Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

10. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

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Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

11. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do.

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Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

12. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

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Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often
ONS4

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Almost Never
Sometimes
Fairly Often
Very Often

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- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

ONS4 Questions

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0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

17. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

18. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

19. On a scale where 0 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”, overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”

Additional questions

20. Are you attending this course whilst...

- Currently working
- Attending as part of return to work
- Attending whilst off work

21. How much of the Create+ course have you attended?

- All of it
- Most of it
- A little bit of it
- None of it

22. Have you had any absence due to sickness in the last 6 months?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

23. If yes to the previous question, how many days absent (approximately)?

(if prefer not to say, leave blank, if don't know put D/K)

(untitled)

Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor

24. Are you happy in your current role?

Yes

No

Unsure

Prefer not to say

25. Do you feel you may want to leave your role in the next 12 months?

Yes

No

Unsure

Prefer not to say

26. Are there any other comments you want to share about the Create+ course?

27. What was your experience of Create+?

28. Please explain your answer:

29. Reflecting back on Create+ what were the most useful outcomes?

30. What effect, if any, did Create+ have on your intention to stay in your current job?

31. What aspects of Create+ could be improved?

32. Do you have any other comments about Create+?

Thank you for taking part in our survey

REPORT END