

Case studies: How can the arts and creativity support people who are shielding or vulnerable during Covid-19?

Creative Care Programme
Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination
East England

Introduction

The Creative Care Programme has developed invitations and resources to support people of all ages to be creative at home. Where possible these are delivered as part of 'creative care packs' but are also free to download or access on line. To date five artists have designed a series of 12 'invitations to create' to help people rediscover the world on their doorsteps in creative ways. These have been distributed within 357 packs alongside specially chosen materials selected by the artists. These invitations encourage people to go out into the world around them, and reconnect with

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Headteacher, Mayfield Primary School



all their senses and with the pleasures of noticing, listening, making and shaping. Four focus on the families with younger children, four on teenagers and four for adults of any age. They all need only the simplest of materials and everyday objects and require no special art skills. The Creative Care packages include high quality art materials and open-ended resources selected by the artists. Online support trialled to date

has included artists joining Zoom classroom sessions (primary school partner) and WhatsApp weekly meetings (The Kite Trust group) as well as emails and phone-calls to encourage engagement and dialogue. Small films are being developed to support each invitation and build connections with the artists. Plans are being developed to develop a future iteration of the box and support with a youth panel for the County.

Image: "River of Colour"

Funders

The work to date has been funded by Fullscope. Future extensions to the programme will be resourced through the Department of Health and Social Care - Voluntary and Community Sector Grant held by Centre 33, another Fullscope partner, and potential grants through Cambridgeshire County Council.

Who is it for?

To date the programme has worked with:

- Families identified as vulnerable linked to a Cambridge primary school.
- Teenagers identified as vulnerable and/or on free school meals linked to Cambridge City community college.
- Young people aged 13 -20 supported by The Kite Trust (LGBT+ charity).
- Vulnerable families supported by local charity, The Red Hen Project, all in a disadvantaged part of Cambridge.
- Adults supported by Arts and Minds with mental health issues.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

These are the outcomes we've identified for the evaluation – they reflect our interest both in consortium work and the final beneficiaries:

- Consortium (with delivery partners) resulted in reaching more vulnerable individuals and groups than if the organisations were working independently of each other.
- Delivery partners and beneficiaries are now aware of the consortium and know how to access the services within the consortium.
- Consortium partners and delivery partners now have a more positive attitude to high quality creative projects constructively affecting health and wellbeing.
- The evaluation of the project provides useful and usable templates and benchmarking data for future, similar projects by any of the consortium partners.
- The beneficiaries felt open and able to play with and use the materials available how they wished.
- The beneficiaries were pleased to receive the materials and felt supported.
- The beneficiaries now perceive their immediate environment differently and more positively.

Where is it happening?

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Are you working in partnership?

The Creative Care programme was initiated by CCI in partnership with two other charities - Arts and Minds (A&M) and Blue Smile - as part of the work of the Fullscope Consortia. Fullscope, launched in October 2019, is a new collaboration between seven leading organisations that support the mental wellbeing of children and young people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The partnership, with support from the National Lottery Community Fund and development support from Arm Limited and Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge, champions, collaborates with and is inspired by the voices of children and young people, taking their lead in order to deliver its aims.

How many people took/are taking part?

The programme is growing but to date has worked with:

- 15 adults
- 86 families with 170 children
- 173 primary school children
- 6 primary school teachers
- 35 teenagers/young adults
- 5 artists

For how long has it been happening?

Work began in April 2020 when 5 artists were contracted to start developing invitations and resources. Resources began to be shared in May.

What were/are the main outputs?

- 12 individual 'invitations to create' created by artist/artists shared in print or available to download or view online.
- Artist led 'workshops' to introduce invitations at 13 online 'classes' run by our primary school partner.
- Linked online resources to support further engagement- to date these have included a short film by two artists introducing the concept and one of the invitations and online galleries of images returned by participants.
- Social media posts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to share invitations and responses.

Evaluation:

An independent evaluation is currently underway – led by arts and heritage consultant Anna Salaman. Results from this will be available in August. Some of the qualitative feedback gathered as packs were distributed is below. Two new partners in the region have approached us to work on future iterations to support the young people they are working with.

To date:

- 357 packs of materials and invitations have been distributed to vulnerable families and young people.
- 698 downloads of invitations from CCI website (May and June).
- 55 viewings of film (in 14 days).

Feedback:

"All except one of the creativity boxes have been delivered and it was a delight to drop them round this morning. The children were absolutely thrilled and their parents really grateful. It really worked I thought, as a way to connect and engage with those families. I was feeling in bit of dip yesterday, with worry and feeling a bit fed up with the situation and what might happen next, but that was just really nice. What a pleasure to see everyone this morning, to know they're okay, and for them to know all these people are still thinking of them. I could literally see that on their faces. Thank you for putting all of these materials and ideas together. You are wonderful." Headteacher, Wilburton Primary School

"Thank you for providing us with all the amazing ideas and different ways to keep our children's brains stimulated. We followed your guidance and collected as many different

objects of as many different colours inside and out. My children loved doing the finding and searching as much as they did the creating. Thanks for providing the packages - made my life a lot easier for a couple of days!! do you have anything else up your sleeve to help spark the curiosity.” Mother, via Instagram

“Love the focus on natural objects & play, think we all need both now more than ever.”
Clare, Art Therapist

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“Nearly everyone expressed pleasure at receiving the art box of materials and had used some things from it. It felt that it was a long-time thing. There was not a sense of doing things every week or following the invites every week. More something to be dipped into and out of. That there was this sense of space and time which was unexpected and positive. A couple of participants were really struggling. I encouraged a few people to do short sessions, just 10 minutes here and there if they did not feel able to do more. I assured them of the value of working in short bursts. Also I encouraged them to use their boxes for anything and just play and enjoy the materials inside them ...the Creative Care packages made people feel good, valued and supported.” Susanne, Artist, Arts & Minds

“A- has asked me to write to you as she is struggling with her anxiety issues at the moment. She would like to say a big ‘thank you’ for the care package you sent. It has played a huge part in motivating her, and in keeping her mental health in check.” AS, carer, Arts and Minds

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Lockdown caused a sudden and shuddering interruption for so many of us and the cancelled contracts and projects had the potential to cause serious damage to many livelihoods and carefully nurtured partnerships. It is early days but the programme seems to have resonated

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really powerfully both with our artist networks and with our partners and with those they support – they have all clearly felt supported by the process and grateful for the opportunities it has offered them and those groups partners work with. It has offered opportunities to put culture and creativity and their importance back into conversations about caring for people.

Our work is underpinned by carefully researched values and principles of practice. The relationship is critical when inviting and enabling creativity. It is a gentle and attentive process which has been challenging to translate to a world either navigated online or through interactions that have no or very limited interpersonal element. The extent to which these have been successfully communicated will become clearer through the evaluation.

Further information

[http://www.cambridgecandi.org.uk/projects/reimagine/events - creative-care-invitations](http://www.cambridgecandi.org.uk/projects/reimagine/events-creative-care-invitations)

Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination (CCI) is an arts and well-being charity working locally, nationally and internationally to build creatively healthy communities. Children and young people and their communities are at the heart of the charity's work. CCI explores how their ideas and questions can lead the way in creative explorations with artists working alongside to support the process. The work is driven by a vision of an inclusive, accessible and creative society. Our programmes, which work to foster deep connections for people with each other and with the world on their doorsteps, often take place in communities with particular challenges. www.cambridgecandi.org.uk

CCI is a charity managed by three freelance staff whose contracts are the equivalent of just under one full time person.