

How Ya Doing? #2 Sut Mae'n Mynd? #2 Artist Wellbeing Programme

Evaluation Report

30TH June 2025



Wales Arts
Health & Well-being
Network
Rhwydwaith Iechyd a
Llesiant Celfyddydau
Cymru

**The Baring
Foundation**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How Ya Doing? #2 (HYD#2) was a two-year, pan-Wales programme delivered by the Wales Arts Health and Wellbeing Network (WAHWN), with funding from The Baring Foundation. Running from September 2023 to February 2025, the programme built on the success of an earlier pilot to embed strategic, sustainable approaches to artist wellbeing across the arts and mental health sectors in Wales.

This evaluation focused on two key elements of the programme:

1. **Reflective Practice Facilitator Training**, which aimed to equip experienced arts practitioners to deliver reflective practice sessions within their organisations or networks.
2. **Strategies for Wellbeing Training**, designed to support arts and cultural leaders to develop and implement strategic wellbeing support for staff and freelance artists.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation gathered quantitative and qualitative data before, during, and three months after the training. It explored participant experience, the impact of the training, and barriers to implementation.

Key Findings

- **Strong Impact on Confidence, Skills and Culture:** Both training programmes achieved their intended outcomes. Participants reported increased knowledge, confidence, and motivation to embed reflective and wellbeing practices in their work. Many noted lasting shifts in mindset and organisational culture.
- **Reflective Practice Training Built a New Community of Practice:** Thirteen participants completed the facilitator training, with eight delivering sessions within three months and 16 more planned. The training fostered connection, confidence, and new facilitation skills, with reflective practice increasingly integrated into staff meetings, project debriefs, and creative sessions. Participants valued the experiential, well-held nature of the training and called for further mentoring and peer support to sustain momentum.
- **Wellbeing Strategy Training Prompted Immediate Change:** Forty-two participants from 33 organisations attended the training, with most making tangible changes within three months, including policy development, regular check-ins, and improved support for freelancers. The training helped participants move from ad-hoc provision to more strategic, embedded approaches. Participants appreciated the peer learning space, recognised their existing strengths, and began influencing wider organisational practice.
- **Barriers Were Real but Navigable:** Across both programmes, participants faced challenges related to time, funding, and organisational culture. However, many found creative ways to adapt their learning, embedding small changes, reframing expectations, and using peer support to maintain momentum.
- **A Strong Appetite for Continued Support:** Participants expressed a clear need for structured follow-up, communities of practice, and access to resources, mentoring, and advocacy tools. There was a shared desire to maintain connections, deepen practice, and influence wider cultural change in the sector.

Recommendations

JANE WILLIS

- Continue to deliver and expand both training programmes, maintaining the reflective, inclusive and experiential approach.
- Offer structured follow-up at 3–6 months to consolidate learning and sustain engagement.
- Develop peer networks, mentoring opportunities and communities of practice to support long-term impact.
- Provide tools, templates and case studies to help organisations embed learning.
- Advocate to funders and organisational leaders for the strategic value of artist wellbeing and reflective practice.

HYD#2 demonstrated that with the right support, creative practitioners and organisations can develop meaningful, sustainable approaches to wellbeing. The programme has laid the foundations for a growing movement that integrates care, reflection, and resilience into the fabric of cultural practice in Wales.

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

How Ya Doing #2 (HYD#2) was a two-year, pan-Wales artist support programme delivered by the Wales Arts Health and Wellbeing Network (WAHWN), as part of Engage Cymru between September 2023 to February 2025.

It built on *How Ya Doing?* (HYD), a pilot commissioned by Arts Council Wales to support freelance artists' wellbeing in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pilot ran from November 2021 to April 2022.

The evaluation of the HYD pilot evidenced a strong need for support. Participants who took part reported feeling weary, tired, exhausted, stressed, and disconnected or lost; often not realising how close to burnout they were until they took time to pause and reflect.

It concluded that the HYD pilot had not only improved participants' *individual* wellbeing but also, in equipping those who took part to begin to address inequitable working practices, helped to create a fairer, safer, and more sustainable sector for all.

HYD#2, delivered by the Wales Arts Health and Wellbeing Network (WAHWN) and funded by The Baring Foundation, responds to these findings with a 2-year programme that aims to create a more sustainable approach to embedding artist support within the arts and mental health sector across Wales.

This evaluation of HYD#2 was commissioned by WAHWN conducted by creative health consultant [Jane Willis](#).

1.1. Wales Arts Health Wellbeing Network (WAHWN)

WAHWN is a rapidly expanding network of peers from across the arts, health and higher education sectors delivering arts and health work in Wales. It grew out of Engage Cymru and exists to support, develop and research arts and health practice in Wales, including:

- Acting as a hub for networking, collaboration, dissemination and research on arts and health practice throughout Wales
- Supporting the resilience and capacity of the arts and health sector in Wales
- Supporting and encouraging ethical research and evaluation practices that raise the profile of the arts to health and wellbeing
- Providing a national voice for arts and health practitioners in Wales at a strategic level.

2. Project Overview

2.1. How Ya Doing #2

HYD#2 ran from September 2023 to February 2025. It supported artists working in mental health settings and with groups vulnerable to poor mental health, while also providing training for arts organisations to deliver reflective practice programmes and develop wellbeing action plans.

Building on the strengths of the original HYD pilot, HYD#2 continued to offer 6-week Creative Reflective Practice Programmes (see Appendix 1) for individual artists across Wales. These were delivered in English, with 1-to-1 sessions also available in Welsh¹.

In year one, WAHWN also trialled three monthly drop-in sessions for participants of the English and Welsh programmes to help sustain reflective practice. However, there was no uptake and the sessions were discontinued.

HYD#2 also piloted two new training offers designed to embed artist support more strategically within organisations working in mental health contexts and with vulnerable groups:

- Reflective Practice Facilitator Training
- Strategies for Wellbeing Training

These two training offers are the focus of this evaluation.

Reflective Practice Facilitator Training

The two-day Reflective Practice Facilitator Training was designed for experienced arts facilitators working - freelance or salaried - within arts organisations in Wales.

The training aimed to equip participants to lead reflective practice groups within their own organisations or externally.

Participants were offered two free online sessions of follow-up support to help them develop and deliver pilot reflective practice programmes one month and three months after the initial training.

Two cohorts completed the training between April and November 2024.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- New reflective practice skills
- Enhanced facilitation skills
- Enhanced capacity to reflect
- Increased sense of personal and professional resilience
- Increased confidence to articulate the benefits of reflective practice
- Connection with growing network of reflective practice facilitators in Wales.

¹ Nine artists received a total of 14 one-to-one sessions in Welsh.

Strategies for Wellbeing Training

The Strategies for Wellbeing Training was designed for trustees and senior staff responsible for strategic wellbeing in arts organisations, particularly those employing freelance artists or delivering participatory arts projects in health, mental health, or wellbeing settings.

Delivered over two half-days via Zoom, four rounds took place between January 2024 and February 2025.

After the training, organisations were offered mentored peer-learning sessions with the trainer to support them to implement the learning.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Improved ability to assess their organisation's current wellbeing offer
- A stronger understanding of effective wellbeing support
- Insight into how organisational culture, structures, and practices impact practitioner wellbeing
- Increased awareness of best practice in supporting artist wellbeing
- A wellbeing action plan tailored to their organisation

See Appendix Two for full details of both the Reflective Practice Facilitator Training and Strategies for Wellbeing Training.

3. Evaluation

3.1. Evaluation Aims

This evaluation explores the effectiveness and impact of the two training programmes delivered through HYD#2:

1. Reflective Practice Facilitator Training
2. Strategies for Wellbeing Training

Using a mixed methods approach, the evaluation identifies key strengths and challenges, and assesses the impact of the training to inform the sustainable development of future wellbeing support programmes.

3.2. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation aims to explore the following three questions:

- What was participants' experience of the training?
- What was the impact of the training?
- What were the challenges and barriers to implementing the learning?

3.3. Evaluation Methodology

A mixed-methods approach combined quantitative and qualitative tools, including surveys, creative workbooks, embedded creative evaluation tools, Zoom polls, and monitoring data.

Participants were invited to reflect on their experience before, immediately after, and three months post-training.

To reflect the ethos of the training and ensure the evaluation was engaging, accessible, and enjoyable, creative approaches to data collection were used wherever appropriate. Creative reflective workbooks and creative tools embedded into the training, which included prompts such as sentence stems, visual cues, and invitations to draw, score, and map their progress.

All qualitative data was transcribed and analysed using Thematic Analysis.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

The evaluation followed good practice ethical principles:

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants
- An information sheet outlining the purpose and process of the evaluation was provided before consent was given
- Every effort was made to protect participants' privacy and maintain confidentiality throughout the evaluation

FINDINGS

4. Reflective Practice Facilitator Training Findings

“It is really important that creative people have space, time and support (and sometimes permission!) to consider the impact of what they do on themselves.”²

4.1. Overview of who took part

Thirteen people took part in the Reflective Practice Facilitator Training - eight in the first round and five in the second.

Participants arrived with some awareness of reflective practice, along with transferable skills and experience from their professional backgrounds. However, most lacked the specific knowledge or confidence to facilitate reflective groups. One participant had experience in Action Learning Sets and coaching but was relatively new to reflective practice. Another brought insight from a clinical background and was motivated to adapt these skills to a new context.

4.2. Hopes for the training

Participants were drawn to the Reflective Practice Facilitator Training for a range of reasons, including a desire to deepen their understanding, strengthen their skills, improve wellbeing, and support others.

While a few participants felt nervous about taking part - due to the length of online sessions or limited facilitation experience - most expressed enthusiasm and a desire to gain new tools.

Developing knowledge and facilitation skills

Many participants wanted a clearer understanding of what reflective practice is - and isn't - including the theory behind it. They hoped to build confidence, learn new techniques, and develop facilitation skills to support both themselves and others:

“I would like to develop my skills as a leader and manager, learning how to hold space for tricky or difficult conversations that sometimes get skipped because no one feels comfortable or empowered to share when things don't feel good, or didn't go to plan.”

“I would like to be able to offer tools to my musicians and ensure their wellbeing is valued.”

“I would like to learn new skills and more about reflective practice, so that I can help other people engage in reflective practice.”

² All quotes are taken from transcribed participant data.

Supporting their own wellbeing

Several participants wanted to embed reflective practice into their day-to-day work to reduce stress, prevent burnout, and create space for thoughtful planning and delivery.

Their aims include:

- Avoiding back-to-back working
- Taking time to pause and breathe
- Staying open to the unexpected
- Becoming calmer and more focused
- Strengthening active listening skills

“I am looking forward to focussing on myself and how reflective practice works for me as an individual.”

Those without access to supervision were especially keen to learn how to protect themselves from the emotional demands of participatory practice:

“I am a practitioner and have managed programmes of community music for several years and realise the impact that supporting people creatively has on us as practitioners.”

Supporting others and embedding reflective practice

Alongside personal benefits, participants were motivated to use their learning to support colleagues, peers, and wider networks:

“The training will support my network and assist my future work.”

Some hoped to inspire the organisations they worked with to embed reflective practices more confidently and create safer spaces for difficult conversations:

“To create space to think more safely about difficult things.”

Building community and peer networks

Participants valued the opportunity to connect with others and hoped to build a network of reflective practitioners for mutual support, learning, and collaboration:

“...coming together and supporting each other as a community.”

Exploring new professional opportunities

Many saw the training as a pathway towards diversifying their practice and developing new income streams. They hoped to design and deliver reflective practice programmes in a range of settings, including:

- Their own organisation
- Partner organisations
- Peer networks
- Artist teams on specific projects

4.3. Perceived Barriers Before the Training

Participants identified a number of barriers that they felt might prevent them from achieving their aspirations after the training. These barriers clustered around four key themes:

- Confidence
- Capacity
- Perceived lack of interest
- Cultural or organizational barriers.

Confidence

Five out of eight participants in the first cohort, and one participant in the second, identified low confidence as a significant barrier to delivering reflective practice. Concerns included feelings of not being "*good enough*," not being "*qualified to do this*," or feeling "*scared*."

Some worried that, as independent freelancers, they might be seen as less credible than organisations or questioned for not having therapeutic training.

"As an independent freelancer, I fear I'll be up against organisations."

"I worry I'm not adequately qualified."

Capacity

Eleven of the thirteen participants raised concerns about capacity, highlighting a range of practical, emotional, and environmental challenges.

Time pressures were mentioned by all five participants in the second cohort. Existing commitments such as deadlines, family responsibilities, and overloaded task lists were frequently cited.

Four participants mentioned that a lack of funding or paid time might prevent them from putting their learning into practice.

Concerns included information overload, learning retention (particularly for those with dyslexia), and the challenge of integrating new approaches into already packed sessions:

"[I worry I won't be] able to retain the information [because of] dyslexia"

"[Will I have] the discipline to factor [this] practice into current session timings."

Several participants cited blurred boundaries between work and home life, a lack of dedicated workspace, or environments not conducive to reflection:

"Can be hard to find comfy spot for paperwork and time to sit at computer."

One person listed nine potential types of distraction that might prevent them from applying their learning, including: "*family commitments... people coming and going!... loads of work going on... [getting] fidgety...not being able to sit still*." Another cited family needs and procrastination as a barrier.

Perceived Lack of Interest

Several participants expressed concern that colleagues, collaborators, or participants might not want to engage with reflective practice. Reasons included:

- A lack of understanding of its value
- Perception that it's unnecessary or irrelevant
- Resistance to changing established ways of working
- Difficulty fitting it into existing routines

"Tough if others don't have same enthusiasm."

Cultural and organisational barriers

Three of the five participants in the second cohort mentioned challenges related to organisational culture, particularly when working across multiple partners with differing values or existing reflection practices:

"What if it rubs against existing reflection mechanisms in the organisations I work with and for?"

4.4. Perceived Barriers After the Training

Immediately after completing the training, participants were asked what might prevent them from setting up a reflective practice group. The most common barriers identified were:

- Confidence
- Time and capacity
- Funding and financial barriers
- Lack of interest or uptake
- Lack of understanding of its value
- Support needs and safeguarding concerns
- Adapting the approach to specific contexts

One person mentioned uncertainty around the future of their organisation and their role, and another said that family circumstances might be a barrier.

Confidence

Despite an overall increase in confidence after the training, some still cited a lack of confidence as a barrier.

"Loss of confidence if I leave too much time between training and delivery."

"Artists I already work with might not see me as the right person to lead this - they may feel they can't be open with someone internal."

"Possible confusion with immediate colleagues about whether this is supervision."

Time and Capacity

Many participants were concerned about their ability to find time and mental space to develop their practice alongside existing commitments.

"Too much work."

"Giving myself time to consolidate my experiences and form my own practice."

"Being overstretched with other work and this limiting the headspace and time I will have to address challenges or barriers."

Funding and Financial Barriers

Cost was a widely cited challenge, both in terms of organisational budgets and project funding.

“There’s no money in the sector or in project budgets.”

“Grant funding is running out at the end of October.”

Lack of Interest or Uptake

Several participants questioned whether there would be enough local demand or buy-in to make a group viable. Others expressed uncertainty about how to attract participants or instil confidence in others to take part.

“Are there enough people locally to use this skill and develop it?”

“No interest from the orgs I reach out to.”

“Apart from my regular singing groups, I have no idea how to conjure up a group who might want me.”

“Limited response or people showing up - inconsistency of attendance impacting on the group.”

Lack of Understanding of the Value

Some felt that organisations or colleagues might struggle to see the relevance or purpose of reflective practice.

“Organizations don’t see the value or don’t understand because it’s a new way of working. Put up barriers, scared.”

“Would other charities or groups see the value and pay the fee for their staff?”

Support needs and Safeguarding Concerns

A few participants highlighted the emotional responsibility of facilitation; the ability to work safely within one’s own competency; as well as the need for appropriate support structures.

“I’m a little concerned about running reflective practice without support staff in case it’s triggering.”

“I need to ensure I have support and infrastructure in place for my own reflection and learning.”

“The more experience I gain, the more I’ll know how to lead and not cause hurtful triggering maybe?”

Adapting to Specific Contexts

Others reflected on how their existing groups might not be the right fit, or how they’d need to shift their usual approach to make reflective practice work.

“My regular groups may be used to my approach and I would need to be clear and open if I was to try something different.”

“My groups are not totally appropriate for this type of offering so I’d need to find a group in need of this service.”

4.5. Actual Barriers Experienced Three Months On

Three months after the training, participants reported on the barriers they had experienced in embedding reflective practice.

Several of the anticipated barriers were not mentioned including:

- Lack of interest or uptake
- Support needs and safeguarding concerns
- Adapting the approach to specific contexts

However, some of the predicted barriers were experienced, including:

- Lack of confidence
- Time and capacity
- Funding and financial barriers
- Lack of understanding of the value of reflective practice

Lack of Confidence

Although the training significantly boosted participants' confidence, many still felt hesitant to apply what they had learned. This manifested in different ways:

Feelings of inadequacy or lack of qualifications:

“Not thinking that I am qualified to offer this sort of work. Feeling that I need recognition before being able to offer it.”

Concerns about working with close colleagues and peers:

“Using the grounding technique specifically with colleagues felt daunting.”

“Challenging because we know each other. I have to be aware of responding as I would in a normal conversation.”

Concerns about working with people they don't know.

“They are more comfortable opening up with a personal contact or practitioner they have already worked with.”

As participants put their learning into practice, they became more aware of what they didn't know, which may have also impacted their confidence.

“I don't know how to advertise this skill apart from my website.”

“I didn't realise how long each task might take until I ran a session.”

Time and Capacity

Competing demands and full workloads made it difficult to implement new practices:

“All the reality of running an organisation that has real impact but takes a lot to do.”

“Due to my employed hours, I couldn’t fit in the days.”

“Little or no development time – paid work takes priority.”

Some participants found ways to create space:

“I ran the session over a lunch break.”

“I’ve notified my manager I’ll be resigning to make space for developing my reflective practice.”

“I now have a set day reserved and am learning not to overcommit.”

Others drew on personal motivation and peer support:

“Remembering how this training helps us be better practitioners.”

“I’ll contact the group to set up a peer programme.”

“I have friends and mentors who help me manage my diary.”

Funding and Financial Barriers

Sustainable delivery remained difficult without dedicated funding:

“Still waiting on other organisations finding funds to buy in reflective practice.”

“It would be great if other organisations could also budget for this.”

Some found creative ways around this by embedding sessions into existing project budgets.

“I need to factor in development time into future funding bids.”

“Ideally, I’ll build this into spaces where I’m already paid to lead groups.”

Lack of understanding of the value of Reflective Practice

Participants found it difficult to engage others who were unfamiliar with reflective practice or uncertain of its value:

“Some artists don’t feel that they need this sort of reflection.”

To address this, they used strategies such as reducing expectations, raising awareness through meetings and informal conversations; and integrating information into inductions and safeguarding sessions.

“We timed sessions to match stewarding/shifts.”

“I chose group members who I thought would work well together.”

“I lowered my expectations around numbers and attendance.”

4.6. Changes in Knowledge and Understanding

The training resulted in a significant increase in knowledge and understanding of reflective practice, which went from fair to good immediately after the training and was sustained three months on from the training.

Levels of Knowledge and Understanding

	Before	Immediately after	3 months later
0 – None	1		
1 – Low			
2 – Fair	5	2	1
3 – Good	6	1	3
4 – Very Good	1	7	7
5 – Excellent		3	2
Average	2.46 (Fair)	3.8 (very good)	3.8 (very good)

4.7. Changes in Confidence

The training resulted in a significant increase in confidence around delivering reflective practice, which rose from low to good immediately after the training. This fell slightly three months on, but remained overall much higher than at the start.

Levels of Confidence

	Before	Immediately after	3 months later
0 – None	1		
1 – Low	7		
2 – Fair	2	1	2
3 – Good	2	3	6
4 – Very Good		6	4
5 – Excellent	1	2	1
Average	1.69 (Low)	3.75 (good)	3.3 (good)

4.8. The Impact on Self and Practice After the Training

Increased Connection and Belonging

One of the most consistent impacts reported was a strong sense of connection to others, to themselves, and to a wider movement of creative practitioners.

Participants valued meeting *“like-minded individuals who share the same values”* and described *“feeling part of a group with similar experiences - concerns, interests, feelings. People who get it.”*

The process of reflection itself, both during the training and in subsequent group facilitation, helped reduce feelings of isolation and deepen personal insight.

"It has improved how I check in daily with myself, and has helped me feel less isolated, and connected me to creative practitioners [who] I feel valued and safe with."

"Working with others reminded me that I'm not alone - that others felt the same way!"

Feeling Safe, Seen and Supported

Participants frequently described the group environment as warm, inclusive, and well-facilitated, fostering psychological safety and openness.

"The general friendliness, openness and honesty of the others was amazing! I felt 'held'."

"Really well held by Alison, who created a warm, safe, slow but dynamic learning space."

"Held nicely and challenged gently."

Experiential Learning

The practical, experiential nature of the course was highly valued:

"Lots of new learning through discussion, reflection and shared resources."

"Hearing others' experience of the process and their work was particularly valuable."

For many, the course deepened curiosity and desire for continued learning:

"The training has whetted my appetite to learn more about my own practice and style of holding space for others."

Consolidating and Developing Skills

Participants gained new skills while recognising and valuing existing strengths.

"That I 'do' reflective practice in some ways now."

"A few light bulb moments about my strengths and preferences that I have not been paying attention to."

They developed practical facilitation skills, including reflective questioning, grounding techniques, summarising, and group structuring.

"The ability to probe in specific situations."

"How a structure can support the group and the building of the safer place to reflect."

Several participants began incorporating reflective tools into their practice immediately.

"I took away my Cawl Reflective Recipe Exercise and repeated it as part of a 30-minute micro teach."

"I led a visualisation... made me realise it's good to experiment."

Participants reported increased ability to create supportive environments for others - and safer, more self-aware practice for themselves.

"[My practice has] been made safer and more gentle."

"Skills to create a safe space for others."

Subtle changes in communication and the use of language also extended into non-professional contexts:

"My choice of words was different after the course when I was talking to friends."

Increased Reflective Capacity

Participants described becoming more reflective and less reactive in their work and daily lives.

"I am much more reflective in general and give myself space to reflect on my own work instead of being reactive."

"[My practice has] improved! I come away and reflect, taking time to consider the impact that giving so much in our practice has on us."

Increased Self-Awareness

For some, the training created space to reconnect with themselves and with what matters most in their work.

"It gave me space to reflect on who I am and how I want to work."

"I need to allow more time to reflect on my own practice."

"I've been running on empty - this made me stop and really think."

Participants also become more attuned to their emotional needs and how they work best, especially recognising the impact of working in isolation:

"That I am feeling a little isolated and I know I do not work well alone."

Reflective practices were seen as complimentary skills that contributed to more sustainable and balanced ways of working.

"[My practice has] become more sustainable due to having this extra skill. I hope that I will be able to advertise this and work with local organisations to support the wellbeing of others."

Improved Listening

The training also led to tangible shifts in the way participants engaged with others, particularly in their listening.

"I have changed the way I listen and allow room and space in conversations - be that personally with friends or professionally."

Increased Confidence

Many reported a noticeable increase in confidence to facilitate reflective sessions.

"A sense of real confidence that I can hold reflective practice sessions in organisations I am a part of."

"More confidence in aspects of how I facilitate – and areas that I want to give more attention to."

“My confidence increased throughout the two days. From having to ask to be invited to speak, to putting myself forward to go first when undertaking the exercise.”

Some found their growth surprising.

“I didn’t think I’d feel confident to deliver, but I do!”

“I didn’t feel confident or comfortable starting the exercise as facilitator but trusted the group and felt more settled once I got started.”

Others reflected on how their learning could be applied in diverse settings:

“I can use this in a variety of settings to support even my board.”

However, not everyone felt fully ready.

“I don’t feel that I’m ‘qualified’ after this amount of training, despite it being excellent.”

Motivation and Momentum

The training left participants feeling inspired and ready to act.

“Happy and fired up to do this.”

“Enthused to carry out some activities as soon as possible.”

“Invigorated, supported, connected, validated.”

“Buoyed up and empowered by the experiences of the group.”

A Shared Sense of Purpose

Many were energised by the idea of contributing to something bigger – a shared culture of reflection and care.

“Amazing passion and energy in everyone to sustain a new movement.”

“Recognising how many amazing creative people we have in Wales and the importance of coming together to reflect, share and acknowledge our experiences.”

Some were inspired to explore ideas for more collective, cross-organisational support:

“Creating a collective to share ideas, share skills and the offer across organisations/areas.”

4.9. The Impact on the Training (Three Months On)

Three months on, there was a shift in perspective in relation to reported impacts. Participants still talked about increased confidence, but alongside this they talked about wider mindset shifts; increased integration of reflective practice in everyday work; the sustained value of peer support; and a deepening understanding of the value of this work.

Confidence

Confidence continued to grow as participants began leading reflective sessions.

“I feel more confident holding reflective spaces for groups.”

“My practice has evolved in confidence... putting into practice aspects of activities and ongoing reflection.”

“I understand... How much starting to embed the learning into practice is helping to build that confidence in the practice”

“I feel... confident about the benefit it brings and ways it can be adapted.”

Personal Growth and Shifts in Perspective

Participants described longer-term shifts in mindset, self-awareness, and values. Several noted that their practice had deepened, becoming more values-aligned, grounded, and intentional.

“This training helped me feel that my own impulse to journal and reflect is valid.”

“Gratitude for all aspects of my life and practice.”

“I feel more grounded and less reactive.”

“I’ve noticed I speak more kindly to myself.”

“This work has made me a better listener - and a better colleague.”

Ongoing Integration

Reflective practice had become more embedded in everyday work. For some, this involved shaping organisational approaches; for others, it meant building shared practices within teams.

“Starting to embed the learning into practice is helping to build confidence.”

“Galvanising more focus and momentum for coordinating and facilitating within artist group spaces.”

Sustained Peer Support

Participants maintained contact with peers and continued learning together.

“Follow-up reflection sessions and connecting up with others from the group.”

“Being part of a group of people who all wanted to learn a new skill and support each other.”

Recognising Value and Impact

By the three-month follow-up, many had a clearer understanding of the value and impact of reflective practice.

“I can see the difference it makes for people... the insights and shifts that can come from that.”

“Realisation of the value and power of reflective practice for individuals and also for the bonding of groups.”

Reflective practice was increasingly seen as a strategic tool, contributing to personal and organisational wellbeing.

4.10. Intended Next Steps Following the Training

Immediately following the training, participants across all cohorts described a range of practical, reflective, and strategic intentions. These fell into seven key themes:

Planning and Preparation

Participants wanted to take time to reflect, prepare, and create a clear plan for delivery. This included drafting outlines, timelines, and publicity. Some planned to create materials or session resources (e.g. checklists, creative prompts, debrief tools).

Testing the Waters

Several aimed to run taster sessions with existing groups or partner organisations. Others planned to explore interest more broadly through informal conversations or emails.

Embedding in Existing Work

A number of participants wanted to bring reflective practice into their current roles or organisations, including staff meetings, peer networks, and regular group activities.

Facilitation Practice

Many were keen to immediately test and refine their facilitation style, often referencing micro-teach sessions or co-facilitated groups to try things out.

Self-Development

Ongoing personal reflective practice was identified as a key next step. Many planned to journal, consolidate learning, and continue developing confidence.

Advocacy and Outreach

A few mentioned promoting reflective practice more widely across the sector, especially in Wales, and increasing understanding among peers or funders.

Community and Peer Support

Staying in touch with their cohort was seen as vital, both for mutual encouragement and continued learning.

4.11. Activity Delivered After Three Months

Most participants had taken meaningful steps towards facilitating reflective practice within three months of completing the training. While some had run full or taster sessions, others had begun embedding reflective elements into their ongoing work or were preparing to deliver future sessions.

Delivery Activity at a Glance

- 8 of 13 respondents had delivered at least one taster session.
- 42 people participated across these sessions.
- 1 full programme had been delivered; another was underway as a pilot.
- 10 respondents planned to deliver more taster sessions in the next three months, with a total of 16 already planned.

“Held a session online with 4 freelance artists... planning to co-facilitate in person at g39 in Cardiff.”

“Ran three group reflective sessions for artists... and introduced reflective questions into meetings.”

Embedding and Integration

Beyond standalone sessions, many participants were embedding reflective practice into their wider creative, organisational, or community settings, often in subtle and personalised ways:

- Adding reflection to regular staff meetings or artist onboarding.
- Designing reflective spaces through music, metaphor or movement.
- Introducing check-ins, journaling, and themed discussions.

Some described this early phase as an intentional testing ground, where they were trying out formats, applying reflective methods in more informal or blended ways, developing language, and gauging interest.

“Planning to use reflective practice techniques as part of a project debrief.”

“I’ve come to a realisation that aspects of my regular workshops already include reflective practice – mindfulness, slowness, tuning into our own bodies...”

“Using songwriting, we focused our words about her... allowing reflection through group creativity.”

This points to a shift towards reflective practice being seen not only as a distinct facilitation offer but as a way of being, creating, and leading.

4.12. Impact of Reflective Practice Sessions Delivered

Impact on those who attended

Reflective practice sessions, even when newly piloted, had tangible effects on participants. Mirroring the impact of the training, respondents reported that people felt safe, seen, and supported.

“Participants gave positive feedback about feeling safe, grounded and encouraged to reflect on their personal journeys.”

“People appreciated the chance to fully reflect on the death of a dear choir member... we allowed grief and laughter too.”

Sessions helped surface shared experiences and foster a sense of not being alone.

“The benefit of engaging in shared discussion when practitioners often work alone.”

Organisational Reception

However, while some respondents’ organisations embraced reflective practice as a tool for wellbeing and learning, others encountered resistance or indifference.

“My organisation has embraced it... sessions are timetabled into monthly planning meetings.”

“My organisation don’t seem to be interested.”

“[It] could do with reflective practice to sustain itself... but is not actively embracing it.”

This suggests that further advocacy may be needed to help organisations understand the value of reflective practice and how to integrate it sustainably.

4.13. Future Aspirations and Support Needs

There is clear potential to nurture a growing community of practice among facilitators who can support one another’s learning and development.

Several respondents expressed a strong desire to “create a peer support group for reflective practice” so that they could continue to “share learning, allow time and to feel supported.”

“To take stock 4–6 months on and connect with others who’ve done the training.”

Others expressed felt the need for a mentor or experienced facilitator to work alongside.

“I’d love the opportunity to shadow or co-facilitate with someone experienced.”

4.14. Suggestions for Improvement

Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the training itself. There was universal praise for the course and the facilitator.

“Alison is a great facilitator, gentle and questioning, but really hitting the right note!”

“I think WAHAWN have done really well to explore this need and enable practitioners to have the opportunity to grow.”

Alongside this, there were minor suggestions for improvement including a preference from some for in-person delivery over Zoom; shorter introductions; and more opportunities to work in smaller breakout groups.

“It would have been great to meet in person, but I wouldn’t take anything away.”

“I didn’t get the chance to connect with everyone – and that made a difference.”

5. Strategies for Wellbeing Training Findings

5.1. Overview of who took part

A total of 42 people from 33 organisations took part in four rounds of Strategies for Wellbeing Training:

- 16 people in cohort one
- 7 people in cohort two
- 5 people in cohort three
- 14 people in cohort four.

Of 24 respondents to the three-month follow up questionnaire, nine attended the mentoring sessions after the training and 15 did not.

Legal Status

Most participating organisations were charities (32), with several also registered as limited companies (7) or community interest companies (1); others included limited companies (3), public institutions (3), and a small number of individuals or those unsure of their legal status.

Income

Organisational income varied significantly, with 11 small organisations earning under £150,000, 10 mid-sized between £150,000 and £349,000, and the majority (20) reporting income over £400,000.

Number of Staff

Staffing levels ranged widely, with most organisations employing between 1 and 50 people (22), though some had no staff (6) or large teams of over 100 (10), including three with more than 1,000 employees.

Region of Wales

Participants were drawn from across Wales, particularly North Wales and Pan-Wales organisations (8 each), with additional representation from Mid and West Wales (7), other Welsh regions, six organisations based in England, and one in Northern Ireland.

Role of Training Participant

Attendees held diverse roles across arts, health, education and leadership, most commonly directors (8), project managers (8), arts managers (4), and staff focused on outreach, inclusion, research, and wellbeing.

See Appendix Three for details of participating organisations.

5.2. Support activities and services currently being delivered

A wide range of wellbeing support for staff and freelancers was already being offered by participating organisations. This included policies, professional support, creative and reflective practices, access to training, and wellbeing activities. The scope and style of support varied depending on organisational size, resources, and delivery model. Existing support includes:

Outsourced Support

This category includes external or contracted services designed to enhance wellbeing provision. Examples included:

- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)
- Access to health services including gym memberships
- Counselling support
- Digital and remote support including wellbeing apps and helplines
- Information and signposting

Embedded Personal and Professional Development

These activities focus on creating internal cultures of care through ongoing reflective practice, tailored development opportunities, and stronger peer support relationships. They are often low-cost but high-impact, supporting staff wellbeing through deeper connection, learning, and responsiveness. They included:

- Training including mental health and safeguarding training
- Regular one-to-one check-ins
- Facilitated reflective practice
- Access to supervision, mentoring and coaching
- Networking and peer support

Wellbeing Activities

Support was also provided in the form of activities designed to nurture both physical and mental wellbeing. Activities included both general and creative wellbeing activities including:

Wellbeing Activities (General)

- Yoga
- Walking groups
- Knit and natter sessions
- Pilates
- Coffee mornings
- Seasonal meetups

Wellbeing Activities (Creative)

- Fortnightly art groups
- Choirs
- Play days
- Arts for wellbeing sessions

Misinterpreted Responses

In a few cases, responses described community-facing wellbeing work rather than internal staff support:

5.3. Hopes for the training

Participants articulated a broad range of hopes, reflecting both practical training needs and deeper aspirations for embedding wellbeing within their organisations. These hopes broadly fell into three categories describing:

1. How they wanted to learn

- Time and Space to Reflect
- Peer Learning and Connection

2. What they wanted to learn

- Increased Knowledge and Understanding
- A More Strategic Approach
- Practical Tools and Actionable Strategies
- Mapping Existing Support and External Resources
- Understanding the Evidence Base

3. Why they wanted to learn

- Motivation and Confidence
- Improving Support for Staff and Freelancers
- Securing Capacity and Sustainability

Time and Space to Reflect

Participants hoped for an opportunity to pause and reflect on their organisation's wellbeing needs and their current approach:

- Reviewing what is already in place
- Benchmarking and improving existing strategies
- Creating space to think more critically about current practices.

"Time to reflect on what we have in place."

Peer Learning and Connection

Participants expressed a strong interest in learning from one another and building a network of like-minded practitioners:

- Making new contacts and connections
- Sharing tools, ideas, and practices
- Forming a community of reflective, values-led leaders
- Staying connected beyond the training

"Learn about shared practices... new ideas, connections and learning."

Increased Knowledge and Understanding

They wanted to gain a clearer grasp of what effective wellbeing support looks like, including baseline expectations and current best practice in the sector, including:

- Understanding the fundamentals of staff and practitioner wellbeing
- Distinguishing between 'essential' and 'ideal' wellbeing provision
- Gaining insight into sector-wide best practice
- Discovering new ideas, insights and perspectives on workplace wellbeing

"An understanding of absolute bare minimum must-have. Understanding of a 'nice to have' if possible."

Strategic Planning and Organisational Development

Many sought a more strategic approach to improving wellbeing support within their teams, particularly in small or under-resourced organisations. Specific aims included:

- Creating or strengthening wellbeing strategies
- Building a more strategic approach to supervision and staff care
- Developing wellbeing policies and embedding them into project planning and budgeting

“A blueprint for how to implement wellbeing strategies in a new organisation where I’m not the Director.”

Mapping Existing Support and External Resources

Participants also wanted a clearer view of what support already exists, both internally and externally:

- Tools, templates and models in current use
- Existing funding sources or initiatives
- Opportunities to build on what others are doing well
- Being inspired by others’ work

“An understanding of what’s available externally.”

Practical Tools and Actionable Ideas

They hoped for tangible, ready-to-use tools and ideas to take back to their organisations. They wanted actionable ways to embed wellbeing across all levels of the organisation:

- Resource templates and planning tools
- Practical ideas around wellbeing support for staff and artists
- Examples from other organisations to learn from and adapt

“Tips and ideas for both formal and informal artist support and care for our team.”

Understanding the Evidence Base

Some participants wanted to better understand the measurable benefits of wellbeing support, particularly in relation to staff retention, absenteeism, and overall team sustainability:

- Evidence-informed approaches
- Case studies and data that support investment in wellbeing

“Find out evidence of benefits in terms of staff retention, sickness and absence.”

Motivation and Confidence

Several hoped the training would boost their confidence and motivate them to lead on wellbeing in their organisations, especially where imposter syndrome or anxiety were barriers:

- Feeling more equipped to speak about wellbeing
- Gaining confidence to facilitate, present, or advocate for change
- Developing leadership skills related to care and inclusion

“I have a lot of knowledge, and I now need to be able to talk about it and support people in implementing it.”

Improving Support for Staff and Freelancers

They hoped that this would enable them to better support staff and freelance practitioners, particularly those working in emotionally demanding roles or with vulnerable groups:

- Tools and approaches to prevent burnout
- Strategies for supporting teams working in complex or high-pressure contexts
- Clear plans for implementing support mechanisms across diverse roles.

“Practical plans of things to implement... a clear idea of how to best support our staff and freelance team in challenging environments.”

Securing Capacity and Sustainability

Finally, many acknowledged the challenge of resourcing this work and hoped the training would offer realistic ideas for more sustainable ways of working:

- Finding funding to support wellbeing initiatives
- Light-touch, practical actions that won't overburden staff
- Models for creating time and headspace for reflective work

"How to reduce the burden on a small, overworked team."

5.4. Perceived Barriers Before the Training

Participants identified a range of barriers that may hinder their ability to implement or sustain wellbeing support in their organisations. These fell under the following key themes:

Limited Capacity and Time

Many participants work in small, under-resourced teams and described feeling overwhelmed by existing responsibilities. This left little room to design, implement, or maintain wellbeing strategies:

"We are a small team with limited money and capacity, rushing from project to project."

"The team are already working at capacity - how can we integrate best practice without adding to their roles?"

"Limited staff resources... already overstretched."

"Workload gets in the way of looking after our own wellbeing."

Even when wellbeing is valued, participants struggled to carve out time for it amid competing demands:

"Finding time in my working week to dedicate to staff wellbeing."

"This is a small part of my job and there is not much time available."

Scheduling and supporting freelance teams - who work irregular hours or remotely - was seen as a logistical challenge for some:

"Freelancers often work alone or in pairs, making it tricky to bring people together."

Funding and Financial Barriers

Participants repeatedly cited a lack of financial resources as key barriers to progress. Many participants felt that wellbeing was deprioritised due to funding pressures, particularly in arts and health settings:

"Funders may be reticent given that wellbeing looks different from project to project."

"There's a lack of funding for arts and health projects - and arts in general."

Cultural and Organisational Barriers

Participants described cultural norms and rigid structures within some organisations that limit opportunities for wellbeing support.

“A culture of working as many hours as possible to demonstrate commitment.”

“Trying to deliver wellbeing support within rigid structures in organisations.”

A lack of organisational commitment was a significant concern. Some worried that colleagues would not engage with wellbeing initiatives or see them as a priority:

“Tough if others don’t buy in.”

There were concerns that wellbeing would fall to one person rather than being embedded across the organisation:

“How to make it the responsibility of the whole company rather than one individual.”

Participants also flagged wider structural and economic factors affecting their ability to prioritise wellbeing. Redundancy threats, funding cuts, and operational pressures were cited as obstacles to wellbeing investment:

“All staff are at risk of redundancy.”

“Ensuring wellbeing strategies don’t impact on core organisational objectives.”

“Wider economic and social issues impact adversely on the arts and social sector.”

Responding to Individual Needs

Participants acknowledged the complexity of tailoring wellbeing approaches to meet a range of personal, cultural, and neurodiverse needs. They flagged the importance of creating neuro-inclusive and psychologically safe spaces. There was awareness that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective:

“Finding suitable ways to tailor support to the many different people we come across.”

Logistical and Geographic Challenges

Some organisations work across wide geographic areas or with dispersed teams, which created additional challenges:

“Logistics of meeting the scale and diversity and geography.”

Confidence and Anxiety

A few participants noted personal barriers, including anxiety, imposter syndrome, or a lack of confidence in their ability to lead this work:

“My own brain! Anxiety over public speaking.”

Measuring Impact

Several participants highlighted the importance of demonstrating the effectiveness of wellbeing strategies:

“How will we notice if the work is effective?”

5.5. Expected Barriers After the Training

Immediately after the training, participants anticipated a range of challenges that could prevent or slow the development of a wellbeing strategy. These are grouped into themes that echo the barriers anticipated before the training.

Time and Capacity

The most cited challenge was still lack of time and staff capacity - an issue often exacerbated by sector-wide funding pressures and workload demands:

- Limited time in already full diaries
- Competing priorities and constant juggling
- Burnout and exhaustion across teams
- Pressure to respond to more “urgent” tasks, pushing wellbeing down the list
- Voluntary staff and freelance workforce with limited capacity to contribute

“Work always being rushed.”

“Lack of time for someone to concentrate on this area.”

Funding and Financial Barriers

Funding constraints were closely linked to capacity challenges, with participants noting:

- Ongoing underfunding in the sector
- Lack of dedicated budget for wellbeing
- Difficulty justifying or ringfencing resource for reflective or relational work
- Competing financial priorities within organisations

“Funding reductions within the sector, partner burnout, structural inequalities.”

Cultural and Organisational Barriers

Deeper structural or cultural barriers continued to be seen as an issue, particularly within larger or more hierarchical organisations:

- Bureaucratic processes and slow decision-making
- Difficulty accessing the right people or decision-makers
- Cultural norms that resist change or prioritise productivity over wellbeing

“Decision-making mechanisms and finding the right people to speak to.”

Several anticipated resistance or reluctance from others within their organisations:

- Resistance from those responsible for causing stress (e.g. poor management)
- Team members feeling the work isn’t relevant to them
- A fear of change or additional workload
- Leadership focused on other priorities

“Staff resistance from those that are responsible for stressful situations.”

A related challenge was low engagement, particularly from staff or freelancers who may not feel connected to the wellbeing agenda.

- Apathy or scepticism about the value of the work
- Fear of being asked to take on extra responsibility
- Surveys and feedback tools not being taken seriously

“People not seeing the importance of the work and not engaging with the surveys.”

Many participants worried that wellbeing might be sidelined in the face of other demands or organisational habits:

- Slipping down the priority list as new issues arise
- Loss of momentum without ongoing accountability
- Difficulty embedding the work into everyday practice

“Keeping it on the radar, up the list of priorities despite what else comes our way.”

Personal Capacity and Sustainability

Finally, participants also highlighted personal challenges, particularly around working in isolation and maintaining their own wellbeing while leading this work:

- Risk of shouldering the work alone
- Maintaining boundaries and work-life balance
- Emotional and mental fatigue from change-making roles

“Not considering one’s own wellbeing.”

5.6. Actual Barriers Experienced Three Months On

Three months after the training, the most commonly cited barriers to developing a wellbeing plan mirrored those anticipated during the training.

Time and Capacity

Part-time roles and overstretched staff made it difficult to prioritise wellbeing planning. Competing demands (e.g. funding submissions, recruitment, mergers) delayed progress.

“Time to complete against competing demands that arise”

“As always time and money! I was down a team member in January so that was a challenge to work around.”

Funding and Financial Barriers

Lack of financial resource limited ability to release staff time or offer paid opportunities. Project-based funding created short-term pressures.

“Lack of financial resource takes priority and impacts staff workloads.”

“Conflicting funding priorities.”

“Funding reductions within the sector.”

Cultural and Organisational Barriers

Cultural and organisational barriers encountered included:

- Unclear ownership of wellbeing strategy development
- Organisational focus on other priorities
- Freelance or artist support being a small part of a wider organisation’s remit.

“Lack of time and knowledge of who’s responsibility it would be.”

Other

Three people did not anticipate any barriers, one person mentioned burnout as a barrier, while another highlighted the need to keep it simple to achieve impact:

5.7. Changes in Knowledge and Understanding

Participants were asked to reflect on their knowledge and understanding of wellbeing support at three points: before the training, on completion, and three months later. The data shows an immediate improvement in knowledge and understanding of wellbeing support after the training with no one rating their knowledge as ‘poor’ and a noticeable shift towards ‘good’ and ‘very good’ ratings.

Three months on, this improvement was largely sustained, with a further increase in ‘very good’ responses. Although there was a drop in the number of people rating their knowledge as ‘good’, this may reflect changes in respondent numbers and growing awareness of the complexity of the topic in practice.

	Before the training	On completion of training	Three months on
Poor	2%	0%	0%
Acceptable	50%	11%	14%
Good	40%	67%	48%
Very good	7%	22%	38%
Total Responses	42	27	21

5.8. Changes in Confidence

Participants rated their confidence in developing effective wellbeing support before the training, immediately after, and three months on. The results show a clear increase in confidence following the training, with no participants rating themselves as ‘poor’ and a significant shift towards ‘good’ and ‘very good’.

Three months later, confidence levels remained higher than before the training, with a continued increase in those feeling ‘very confident’. While there was a slight drop in the number rating their confidence as ‘good’, this likely reflects both the reduced number of follow-up respondents and the challenges of applying learning in real-world settings.

	Before the training	On completion of training	Three months on
Poor	10%	0%	0%
Acceptable	52%	11%	19%
Good	36%	70%	52%
Very good	2%	19%	29%
Total Responses	42	27	21

5.9. Satisfaction with the training

Satisfaction with the training was high. Most participants felt the training met their needs, with 25 out of 27 saying they were mostly or completely satisfied. The trainer's quality and approach were also rated very positively, with all participants describing it as either positive or very positive.

5.10. Level of Staff and Artist Wellbeing Support

Participants were asked to rate the overall level of staff and artist wellbeing support in their organisation before the training and again three months later. The data shows a small shift towards improvement, with fewer participants rating support as 'poor' and more rating it as 'very good'. However, the number of responses at follow-up was considerably lower, which limits the extent to which firm conclusions can be drawn. Nonetheless, the changes suggest some early signs of progress.

	Before the Training	Three Months On
Poor	10%	10%
Acceptable	55%	29%
Good	33%	48%
Very good	2%	14%
Total Responses	42	21

5.11. Learning Outcomes and Insights

Participants reported a wide range of learning outcomes, from practical actions to shifts in perspective. These are grouped below into key themes:

Shared Learning and Peer Connection

Participants appreciated having structured, uninterrupted time away from their usual work to reflect, learn, and plan. Time to talk with colleagues helped consolidate ideas and boost motivation.

Listening to the experiences of other organisations helped participants realise they were not alone in the challenges they face.

Seeing diverse examples of both good and poor practice was valuable and inspiring, offering practical lessons and new ways of working. Conversations with peers offered motivation, reassurance, and a sense of shared purpose.

"That other organisations of various sizes are facing the same challenges and barriers; that we are doing some things really well."

Recognising Existing Strengths

Many participants noted that their organisation already has positive practices in place, even without a formal wellbeing policy. This helped build confidence and strengthened a desire to move from ad-hoc support towards more embedded, organisation-wide approaches.

Prioritising and Pacing Change

Participants recognised the importance of working within their capacity and doing less but doing it better. A key takeaway was the value of starting small, focusing on one well-chosen action that might lead to meaningful change.

“Being kind to yourself with realism around what can be achieved.”

Reflective Practice and Time to Think

Reflective practice was recognised as both valuable and under-resourced. Participants noted how often it gets squeezed out, yet how essential it is for sustaining practitioner wellbeing and improving organisational insight. Several planned to budget for reflective practice and integrate it more intentionally.

“Realising how little time I have to reflect – it does happen but usually ends up being an add-on.”

Putting Policy into Practice

There was strong support for developing clear, accessible wellbeing policies and plans. However, participants also acknowledged that policies and plans are not enough unless they are embedded in daily practices and organisational cultural. For example, respondents recognised the need for wellbeing to be included on trustee agendas, within risk assessments, and planning processes.

“You can have all the policies in the world but need cultural/org change to embed.”

Towards Cultures of Care

The training sparked longer-term reflection on structural change and inclusive wellbeing practices. Wellbeing was increasingly viewed not just as a set of actions, but as a culture to be nurtured.

5.12. Readiness to develop a wellbeing support plan

Most participants felt ready to develop a wellbeing support plan following the training, with the majority saying they were mostly or completely ready. A smaller number felt only somewhat or slightly ready, suggesting varied levels of confidence and preparedness across the group.

5.13. Intended Actions

Immediately after the training, participants shared a wide range of intentions. Their responses show a strong desire to influence organisational culture and embed wellbeing in sustainable and inclusive ways. The key themes are outlined below.

Sharing Learning and Building Buy-In

Participants recognised the importance of sharing what they'd learned with others in order to gain organisational buy-in and support wider implementation:

- Reporting back to senior leaders, trustees, staff, freelancers, and steering groups
- Using learning to influence internal discussions and shape future direction
- Raising awareness and generating shared ownership of next steps

“Share the content with the senior leadership team and get agreement about an approach. Then discuss with staff, freelancers and community steering group.”

Collective Responsibility

A clear message emerged around the need for collective responsibility and support in implementing wellbeing strategies:

- Intentionally identifying allies across teams
- Involving boards, freelancers and staff to build a holistic view
- Seeking mentoring, peer support, and communities of practice

“Don’t do this alone - work with colleagues, board and freelancers to ensure you are getting a well-rounded organisational insight.”

Budgeting for Wellbeing

Some participants recognised the importance of resourcing wellbeing, especially when planning future projects:

- Intending to cost in wellbeing activities across all budgets
- Framing wellbeing not as an add-on but as a core part of project and organisational planning

“Add wellbeing in as a costing in all budgets going forward.”

Developing an Action Plan

Many participants saw developing a wellbeing action plan as an immediate and tangible next step:

- Writing a realistic, evolving plan that includes both artists and staff
- Aligning the plan with safeguarding, access, and inclusion
- Refreshing or building on existing plans

“Develop a strategic action plan around how safeguarding, wellbeing and access are all acknowledged and responded to.”

Practical intentions included reviewing and formalising processes that already exist informally.

“Formalise lots of our informal practices.”

Creating Wellbeing Resources

Participants highlighted the need to develop clear, accessible wellbeing resources for those they work with including wellbeing handbooks, toolkits, and access rider templates.

“Create an artist wellbeing handbook.”

Scheduling Regular Debriefs and Check-Ins

Embedding reflection and communication into project cycles was another key action:

- Scheduling debriefs after each project
- Making check-ins with artists more consistent
- Using these moments to listen and adapt

“Plan for debriefs after each project.”

Influencing Strategy and Governance

Several participants planned to advocate for change at leadership and governance level:

- Raising wellbeing at board meetings
- Suggesting new roles (e.g. trustee wellbeing lead)
- Reviewing charitable objectives to better reflect commitment to practitioner wellbeing

“Talk to our Chair of Trustees about adding wellbeing to the agenda.”

Embedding Wellbeing Across the Organisation

Beyond standalone actions, several participants were focused on systemic integration of wellbeing:

- Reviewing and updating all organisational policies through a wellbeing lens
- Creating organisation-wide strategies approved by trustees
- Linking wellbeing to existing structures like governance and charitable objectives

“Try to think about wellbeing in all of our policies. I will take this to the board.”

5.14. Immediate Next Steps Following the Training

Participants identified a range of practical steps to begin implementing their learning. These are grouped below into key themes that reflect both individual responsibility and collective action.

Modelling and Prioritising Personal Wellbeing

Many participants acknowledged the need to ensure personal wellbeing isn't overlooked in the drive to improve systems. They recognised that *“embedding wellbeing in an organisation must start with the individual”* and committed to modelling healthy behaviours as a way of creating cultural change:

- Taking regular breaks and avoiding back-to-back meetings
- Being more mindful of their own wellbeing in daily routines
- Seeking 1:1 support if needed

“Remembering to include my own wellbeing in this work! Not just creating more work.”

Reviewing Current Practice and Identifying Gaps

Many recognised the need to pause and assess where they already are before developing new plans:

- Reviewing existing wellbeing practices and informal supports
- Auditing what's working, what's missing, and where the gaps are
- Clarifying what's already embedded and what could be improved

“Work out where we are and where we need to be.”

Consultation

A strong emphasis was placed on consultation, not rushing into solutions, but creating space to hear diverse voices:

- Consulting with staff, freelancers, artists, and partners
- Creating space for feedback and conversation across teams

“Be ready to listen!”

Drawing on Existing Strengths and Resources

Participants identified opportunities to build on what they already have - internally and externally:

- Using team creativity to design wellbeing activities
- Identifying who might support the work (internally or financially)

“Look at existing resources and research to inform starting point.”

Planning and Structuring the Work

Several participants were already moving into the action planning phase, taking initial steps to organise and prioritise tasks:

- Creating checklists and booking time in the calendar
- Breaking the work into manageable steps

- Beginning to complete a draft wellbeing action plan

“Made a to-do list and booked time in the calendar.”

Aligning Organisational Strategy with Wellbeing Goals

Several participants linked next steps with strategic influence - ensuring wellbeing is included in the organisation's core structures and governance:

- Proposing changes to charitable objectives
- Advocating for wellbeing to appear in policies and values
- Initiating board-level conversations

“Support colleagues and board in adding wellbeing of staff/artists/workforce to our charitable objectives.”

5.15. Actions and Progress Three Months On

Participants identified and began implementing a wide range of practical steps, including:

Behaviour Changes and Operational Improvements

Respondents reported that the training helped them identify a number of small but significant operational and behavioural changes including:

“Identifying the small actions like weekly walks or activity opportunities.”

“Avoiding back-to-back meetings”

“Never skipping lunch”

Three months after the training, they reported that they had achieved many of these, including:

“More 1:1 sessions and regular check-ins”

“More availability and time for catch ups and regular conversations around value of rest/ pause/ and recharging.”

“Reminding each other about taking breaks.”

“Monthly staff coffee mornings”

Improved Support for Artists and Freelancers

The training helped respondents identify many practical steps to take towards supporting artist and freelancer wellbeing including:

“Providing more opportunities for artists to meet, socially and for training/networking.”

“Put into place more opportunities for our freelance artists to attend supervisions and Creative Reflective Practice sessions.”

“Reviewing our delivery and planning, creating some resources to support artists and processes for support.”

“Developing an access rider template for artists and participants.”

Many of these had been actioned three months later:

"We include Artist Supervision as standard in project plans going forward."

"We factor in time into project management fees for effective communication and support for freelance artists."

"We held a free collage masterclass for artist tutors to develop this practice and socialise, 8 artists attended."

"We have provided more free studio space to artists and publicised this opportunity more."

Development of Wellbeing Plans

Several identified the need for a wellbeing plan, as well as steps towards this.

"It helped us to reflect as an organisation what we are doing well and also to identify gaps across the different departments."

"Wellbeing strategy working across every area of the organisation, working it alongside other policies and practices already in place."

"Audit of best practice"

Three months after the training, few had wellbeing plans in place, but were working towards this:

"[We have completed a] staff wellbeing survey"

"We are currently upskilling our wellbeing champions in more training programmes."

"Started a process of comparing contracts for freelancers across departments."

Wellbeing Embedded at Policy Level

While not everyone intended to develop a wellbeing strategy or plan, several respondents identified ways of embedding wellbeing more firmly across other policies.

"Embedding artist wellbeing into organisation policy and legislation, especially at board level... fair pay and considerate management."

"We have used the training to help us review current policies."

"Consistency across contracts and onboarding processes."

They told us:

"[We] built in money to the budget for the next financial year for paid artist training (there was zero in the budget for this year)"

"Artist Wellbeing support is a standing point on the board meeting agenda."

"[We are] writing in more support for staff and artists into our funding applications e.g. including costs for supervisions and time for peer support."

5.16. The Impact of Developing a Wellbeing Support Plan

Some participants noted limited awareness of progress or that the plan was still under development. A few reported no action had yet been taken due to contextual limitations or lack of clarity around responsibility.

“None really - life is always moving too fast and there aren't enough of us working here for anyone to put any energy into it.”

Others noted that, where wellbeing support plans had been developed or were in progress, impacts included:

- Greater clarity around existing strengths and gaps
- Establishment of new policies, roles (e.g. Wellbeing Champions), and training programmes
- Increased organisational alignment around wellbeing values.

CONCLUSIONS

6. Reflective Practice Training Conclusions

The Creative Health Reflective Practice Facilitator Training successfully delivered its aims and generated significant personal and professional impact for participants. It not only deepened knowledge and enhanced facilitation skills but fostered a strong sense of connection, confidence, and purpose. The training has laid a foundation for a growing community of reflective practice facilitators who are beginning to embed this work across organisations and peer networks.

Three months after the training, eight of the thirteen participants had delivered one or more reflective practice sessions, with a further 16 sessions planned.

Participants were also applying reflective tools and approaches across their wider work, embedding tools for reflection in team meetings, artist inductions, project check-ins and debriefs, and within their own creative practices.

Strong appetite for reflective practice, personally and professionally

Participants were highly motivated by the potential for reflective practice to support their own wellbeing, enable safer and more sustainable ways of working, and offer value to others. They saw reflective practice as both a tool and a mindset that could be integrated into group facilitation, everyday work, and organisational development.

Marked improvements in knowledge, skills, and confidence

The training led to a significant and sustained increase in participants' understanding of reflective practice and their confidence in facilitating it. Confidence rose markedly during the training and, while it dipped slightly three months on, it remained substantially higher than at the start. Experiential learning, psychological safety, and skilled facilitation of the training were key.

Personal growth and mindset shifts

Participants reported increased self-awareness, a more grounded and reflective approach to their work, improved wellbeing, and a greater sense of agency and purpose. Reflective practice enabled them to reconnect with themselves, work more intentionally, and lead with greater empathy. These mindset shifts were sustained and deepened over time, indicating the transformative potential of reflective practice.

Barriers were real but often navigable

While anticipated barriers such as time, confidence, and funding were experienced, others – like lack of uptake or safeguarding concerns – proved less limiting than expected. Participants showed creativity and determination in overcoming challenges: setting boundaries, reframing expectations, seeking peer support, and integrating reflective practice into existing roles or funded work.

Reflective practice was embedded in diverse and meaningful ways

Three months on, participants were actively adapting reflective practice to suit their contexts, from facilitating reflective practice groups to integrating reflective tools into their own creative work, as well as internal meetings and onboarding processes. This demonstrates the flexibility

of the model and its resonance across settings. For many, reflective practice was no longer seen as an “add-on” but as a way of being, creating, and leading.

Impact extended to participants' networks

Newly trained facilitators reported that those attending their sessions felt supported, connected, and seen. While organisational receptiveness varied, some settings embraced reflective practice as a tool for learning and wellbeing. In others, more advocacy may be needed to build understanding and embed reflective approaches more systematically.

The value of peer support was clear and ongoing

A strong theme throughout was the desire for ongoing connection. Peer support, shared learning, and community were seen as vital to sustaining confidence, momentum, and reflective practice itself. Many participants expressed a desire to continue learning together, suggesting strong potential for a longer-term network or community of practice.

7. Strategies for Wellbeing Training Conclusions

The *Strategies for Wellbeing* training programme successfully addressed a clear and widespread need across the arts, health and community sectors for more structured, embedded and sustainable approaches to staff and practitioner wellbeing.

Forty-two participants took part, representing a diverse cross-section of thirty-three organisations, many of which were operating under pressure with limited time, capacity and resources.

Despite these challenges, the training provided valuable space for reflection, learning and planning, prompting real behavioural change, policy development, and cultural shifts, even within a short timeframe.

High demand for structured, strategic wellbeing support

Participants entered the training with a shared desire to move beyond ad-hoc approaches towards coherent, embedded wellbeing strategies.

Many were already delivering elements of support. This included outsourced wellbeing support such as access to free counselling; embedded support such as supervision and reflective practice; and wellbeing activities such as social and creative sessions. However, they lacked the time, tools or confidence to formalise or resource these.

The training responded effectively to this need, supporting attendees to audit current practice, identify gaps, and take practical steps towards strategic action.

Peer learning and reflective space were highly valued

Participants appreciated the chance to step away from the day-to-day to reflect, listen and learn from others. The opportunity to hear diverse approaches helped participants reframe their own practice, build confidence, and realise they were “*doing better than they thought.*”

Increased knowledge and confidence sustained over time

Participants reported a significant increase in both knowledge and confidence following the training. These improvements were largely sustained three months later, even among those who faced significant barriers to implementation. The growing awareness of complexity, including around neurodiverse needs, cultural barriers, and structural inequalities also contributed to a more thoughtful, inclusive approach to embedding wellbeing support.

Barriers were significant but not insurmountable

The most cited obstacles before and after training were time, capacity, and funding. These reflect structural challenges within the sector rather than lack of interest or motivation.

Cultural and organisational resistance also emerged as a barrier, particularly in larger institutions or where there was a lack of senior buy-in. Nonetheless, many participants took meaningful steps within their sphere of influence, from making small practical changes to influencing board-level strategy.

Training catalysed practical action

Although not all participants had developed wellbeing action plans within three months, most had implemented a range of tangible actions, including reviewing policies, introducing check-ins, improving support for freelance artists, and developing wellbeing resources. Others were embedding reflective practice and budgeting for supervision or artist development. Even small behavioural shifts, such as avoiding back-to-back meetings or modelling personal boundaries, signalled a wider commitment to cultural change.

An appetite for longer-term change and collective responsibility

Participants increasingly saw wellbeing as a shared, strategic priority that must be embedded at all levels of organisational culture. While not everyone intended to develop a wellbeing strategy of plan, several identified ways of embedding wellbeing more firmly across other policies to affect organisational change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Reflective Practice Training Recommendations

1. Continue to invest in reflective practice facilitation training

The evidence shows that the training offers significant benefit, both immediately and in the months that follow. Future delivery should retain the experiential approach, gentle and inclusive facilitation, and the balance of theory and practice that made the programme so impactful.

2. Offer structured follow-up to consolidate learning

Participants reported a dip in confidence three months on, especially when time had passed without practice. A structured follow-up session or reflective gathering at 3–6 months could help consolidate learning, reconnect peers, and provide a space to share challenges, celebrate progress, and restore momentum.

3. Support ongoing peer networks and communities of practice

Participants clearly valued mutual support and were keen to stay in touch. Establishing a community of practice could help sustain confidence, share approaches, and create cross-sector connections. Co-facilitation or buddy systems might also ease the transition into practice.

4. Increase access to mentoring and shadowing opportunities

Some participants expressed a desire to learn alongside experienced facilitators. A light-touch mentoring scheme or opportunities for co-facilitation could support newer practitioners to build confidence, develop their facilitation style, and deliver reflective sessions safely and effectively.

5. Build understanding among organisations and funders

While many embraced reflective practice, some encountered resistance or lack of interest within their organisations. Advocacy may be needed to build wider understanding of reflective practice and its benefits. A briefing or case study pack for organisations, funders, and commissioners could help position reflective practice as a strategic asset for wellbeing, learning, and organisational development.

6. Encourage integration into funded programmes

To overcome financial barriers, reflective practice needs to be recognised as a legitimate component of funded work. Encouraging practitioners to cost reflective sessions into project budgets, and supporting funders to understand their value, could make delivery more sustainable.

7. Offer flexible formats and hybrid delivery models

While Zoom delivery made the training accessible, some participants expressed a preference for in-person connection. Future models could include hybrid options or asynchronous elements to support accessibility.

8. Continue gathering and sharing impact

The longer-term impact on individuals, groups, and organisations is just beginning to emerge. Continued evaluation, including follow-ups beyond three months, could help demonstrate the ripple effects of this work. Capturing stories of change, at both personal and organisational levels, will be key to evidencing and advocating for reflective practice.

9. Strategies for Wellbeing Training Recommendations

1. Continue to offer and expand wellbeing strategy training

Although take up was not consistently high, the levels of engagement and satisfaction point to the value of continuing to deliver this training, including offering it to new organisations, while also supporting alumni to deepen and sustain their work through follow-up offers or an extended programme.

2. Provide structured follow-up and accountability mechanisms

A structured 3–6 month follow-up session or check-in group could help sustain momentum, troubleshoot emerging challenges, and build community. Opportunities to report back, reflect on progress, and receive encouragement could help prevent wellbeing from slipping off the agenda in the face of competing priorities.

3. Support communities of practice and peer networks

Participants clearly valued peer connection. Setting up a community of practice or informal peer mentoring network could provide vital encouragement, shared resources, and accountability.

4. Promote board-level and leadership engagement

Change is difficult to embed without senior buy-in. Provide briefings, workshops or resources aimed at trustees and senior leaders to help them understand the strategic value of wellbeing, the risks of inaction, and the practical steps they can take to lead by example.

5. Advocate for funders to support wellbeing infrastructure

Funding constraints were a consistent barrier. Support participants to build the case for budgeting wellbeing into projects, not just as optional extras, but as core infrastructure. Work with funders to develop expectations and frameworks that explicitly support this.

6. Offer tools and templates to save time and increase consistency

Participants often requested practical resources to reduce workload and fast-track implementation. Create and share adaptable templates for tools such as action plans, wellbeing audits, access riders, debrief processes, and policy checklists, ideally co-developed or curated from peer contributions.

7. Encourage reflective practice as part of wellbeing infrastructure

Participants recognised the value of reflection but struggled to make space for it. Promote reflective practice as a core element of organisational sustainability and practitioner wellbeing. Offer facilitation, resources or training to help embed this across project cycles.

8. Emphasise inclusive and trauma-informed approaches

Participants acknowledged the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Future training and resources should continue to foreground inclusive, neurodivergent-aware and trauma-informed practice, especially in how policies are developed, implemented and reviewed.

9. Track and share impact to sustain momentum

Gathering and sharing stories of how organisations are embedding wellbeing, and the impact of this, can motivate others and demonstrate value. Consider gathering evidence-based case studies for the WAHWN Knowledge Bank.

10. APPENDICES

10.1. Creative Reflective Practice Sessions

A six-week creative reflective practice programme was delivered as part of HYD#2, but not include within the scope of this evaluation.

The creative reflective practice programme was aimed at creative practitioners who are working in mental health settings or supporting participants who are more likely to experience mental health issues, including the criminal justice system, refugees and asylum seekers, survivors of domestic and sexual violence and people who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences.

This Creative Reflective Practice programme facilitated by Alison O'Connor, an integrative therapist and clinical supervisor, with a particular interest in compassion-based approaches and many years arts and health experience, and theatre maker and qualified Somatic Experiencing Practitioner Jain Boon, offered a safe, facilitated space for artists of all disciplines to connect with other creative practitioners.

Alison shared a series of exercises inviting participants to reflect on their work and wellbeing through a compassionate lens.

Jain offered creative somatic exercises to support the nervous system help prevent overwhelm.

Alongside this, dance artist, Arts Psychotherapist, and Somatic Experiencing Practitioner, Cai Tomos offered one-to-one Creative Reflective Practice sessions in Welsh. These sessions focused on working with the body-mind in a way that helps create space around themes or challenges related to practice, to help participants widen perspective and gain insight.

14 artists attended the English language programme, and 9 artists had 14 1-to-1 sessions on our Welsh language programme.

10.2. HYD#2 Reflective Practice Facilitator Training

The two-day Reflective Practice Facilitator Training was designed for experienced arts facilitators working - freelance or salaried - within arts organisations in Wales.

Two cohorts completed the training between April and November 2024. The programme aimed to equip participants to lead reflective practice groups within their own organisations, with the potential to deliver similar support for others.

Course Content

Day 1

- Experience a reflective practice session as a participant, followed by group reflection
- Introduction to reflective practice and group dynamics
- Facilitation styles and core skills
- Structuring a session: timing, objectives, and group agreements

Day 2

- Practice facilitation in small groups with feedback
- Key considerations: supervision, self-care, safeguarding, roles and responsibilities, common challenges
- Designing your first reflective practice programme

Participant Expectations

After completing the course, participants were expected to design and deliver a short reflective practice programme - minimum three sessions - within their organisation or, for freelancers, in partnership with an organisation.

Follow-up

Participants were offered two free online sessions of follow-up support to help them develop and deliver this pilot reflective practice programme one month and three months after the initial training.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Participants were expected to gain:

- New reflective practice skills
- Enhanced facilitation skills
- Enhanced capacity to reflect
- Increased sense of personal and professional resilience
- Increased confidence to articulate the benefits of reflective practice to senior managers and trustees.
- Connection with growing network of reflective practice facilitators in Wales.

Cost

The cost of the training was £180, or £140 concessions and for small organisations that receive no core funding.

The Trainer

The training was devised and delivered by Alison O'Connor, a consultative supervisor with 25 years' experience of groupwork, therapy and applied theatre. Alison has worked in diverse settings, including prisons, Romanian orphanages, in substance misuse, with older adults, military veterans and survivors of complex trauma. Alison is committed to enhancing practitioner wellbeing by co-creating restorative, reflective experiences that allow people in the helping professions to be well in the work they do.

10.3. HYD#2 Strategies for Wellbeing Training

The Strategies for Wellbeing Training was designed for trustees and senior staff responsible for strategic wellbeing in arts organisations, particularly those employing freelance artists or delivering participatory arts projects in health, mental health, or wellbeing settings.

Delivered over two half-days via Zoom, four rounds took place between January 2024 and February 2025.

The first two rounds were attended by 24 participants from 21 organisations.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Participants were expected to gain:

- Improved ability to assess their organisation's current wellbeing offer
- A stronger understanding of effective wellbeing support
- Insight into how organisational culture, structures, and practices impact practitioner wellbeing
- Increased awareness of best practice in supporting artist wellbeing
- A wellbeing action plan tailored to their organisation

Course Content

Day 1

- Exploring organisational values and how practitioner wellbeing aligns with them
- Practical steps towards developing a wellbeing support plan, including contracting, communication, access, and induction

Day 2

- Understanding affective support and exploring creative tools and resources for delivery teams
- Reviewing examples of best practice
- Developing a tailored Wellbeing Action Plan

Mentoring

After the training, organisations were offered mentored peer-learning sessions with the trainer to support them to implement the learning.

Cost

The cost of the training was £70 for revenue-funded organisations and £40 for non-Arts Council Wales revenue funded organisations. There were a small number of free bursaries.

The Trainer

The training was devised and delivered by freelance consultant and trainer Justine Wheatley. An arts professional for over 20 years, Justine brought a wealth of practical experience about how to creatively support delivery teams in arts and health contexts informed by her previous role as Executive Director of rurally-based arts organisation [Peak Cymru](#).

10.4. Strategies for Wellbeing: Overview of Participating Organisations

Legal Status

The majority of those who took part were charities (24), several of whom had a dual status of charity and limited company (7) or community interest company (1). Three were limited companies, three institutions, one unsure of the legal status, and one person who did not work for an organisation.

Of those who took part, there were:

24	Charities
7	Charities and Limited Companies
1	Charity and Community Interest Company
2	Partnership / Community Interest Company
3	Limited Companies
3	Other (BBC, university, and NHS)
1	No organisation
1	Unsure

Income

The income of organisations varied widely. Eleven were small organisations with income of under £50,000 (4) or under £150,000 (7); Ten were mid-sized with an income of between £150,000 - £349,000. However, the majority (21) were larger organisations, or whom twenty had an income of more than £400,000:

4	£0 - £49,000
1	£50,000 - £99,000
6	£100,000 - £149,000
1	£150,000 - £199,000
1	£200,000 - £249,000
3	£250,000 - £299,000
5	£300,000 - £349,000
1	£350,000 - 399,000
20	£400,000+

Number of Staff

The number of staff employed varied similarly. Most had between 1 - 50 staff (22), six had no staff, and four had between 51 and 100 staff. However, ten had more than 100, including three with more than 1,000 staff.

6	None
22	Between 1 - 50
4	Between 51 - 100
6	Between 101 - 500
1	Between 501 - 1,000
3	More than 1,000

Region of Wales

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Most of whom attended were based in North Wales (8), South Wales East (8) and Mid and West Wales (7), with 8 from Pan Wales organisations. The last two cohorts included 6 organisations based in England.

8	Pan Wales
8	North Wales
7	Mid and West Wales
8	South Wales East
3	South Wales West
1	South Wales Central
6	England

Role of Training Participant

Participants came from a range of sectors, with different job titles, which could be categorised as follows:

8	Director
8	Project Manager
4	Arts Manager
3	Education and Outreach
3	Arts and Health
4	Access and Inclusion
3	Administration
2	Marketing and Communications
2	Research and evaluation
2	Academic
1	Wellbeing
1	Trustee
1	Freelance artist

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