

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

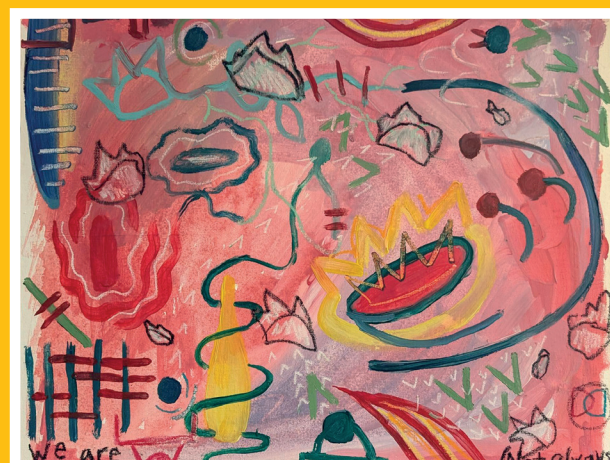
Year 1 Evaluation Summary (Apr – Dec 2025)

The Young People's Voices project was developed to enhance CAMHS services by engaging with young people more deeply via creative offerings; to hear and amplify their stories, and to re-establish them at the heart of service delivery.

The project was funded by the Baring Foundation and Arts Council Wales Lottery Fund, and led by the Arts in Health team at ABUHB.

Project Delivery

- **3 artists in residence, 3 family engagement artists and 1 creative observer artist** were recruited to the project through an open tender process. They have become an effective learning group & community of practice.
- **CAMHS and the Arts in Health team**, guided by the ideas of the **Youth Participation Panel**, co-created the work with a strong focus on open communication and managing risk within the clinical environment.
- The project delivered **25 days of artist in residence activity** in **4 different Waiting Spaces**, meeting over **180 young people**.
- The **Youth Participation Panel** had **8 creative sessions with an artist in residence** and welcomed **3 new attendees** as a result of a Waiting Space activity.
- Artists delivered **3 Creative Development sessions** for clinicians, using creativity to support their wellbeing and share ideas for introducing arts activity into their practice with young people.
- Year 1 demanded agile real-time adaptation, with significant learning around navigating CAMHS appointment patterns and engaging families outside formal clinical settings.



Key impacts of Young People's Voices in Year 1

- Enhancing waiting spaces so that they feel welcoming and represent young people

"Most definitely the interactions are all about serving the young person and the young person has an understanding hopefully that this is their space and we want it better for them."

"My expectations were just to focus on that moment of how I can make sitting in this room a better experience"
(Artists in Residence)

- Engaging young people with an enjoyable activity; easing waiting room anxiety; helping young people to feel more comfortable in CAMHS settings

"When I would leave my door open normally it's just silent. But I would feel laughter and I think that was just so heart-warming for us, because that's not a way of responding when you're anxious... giving us signals that people are feeling safe in that space" (CAMHS Clinician)

- Building positive relationships between young people and artists

"Some really lovely moments with young people that were quiet and then we would do something and they might open up a little bit of conversation. That can be really significant."

- Generating a sense of pride in creativity and display of creations
- Enabling young people to feel 'seen' as an artist and individual

Artists were praised for being "warm", "gentle and non-judgemental", "accepting and compassionate", "with a gentle intention just to be with the children and not try to change them".

- Improving clinical outcomes due to young people being ready to engage with appointments

"My sense is that children are entering their sessions more able to reflect and talk and connect, which feels like a huge benefit. I think that just has a knock-on effect for any intervention that you're then going to provide" (CAMHS Clinician)

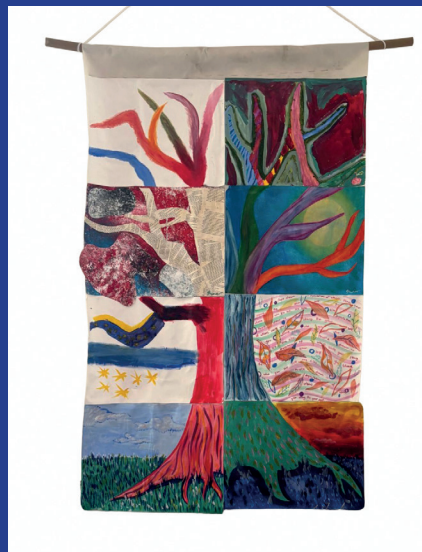
- Providing an opportunity for parents and carers to share their feelings

Impact has been sustained and extended by providing artist developed creative provocations and take-home materials so that engagement has continued even when artists were not present.

Concluding Remarks

In Year 1, the Young People's Voices project has:

- Acknowledged the need to make young people feel welcome in existing child-centric places within CAMHS.



- Offered young people a clear invitation to interact with their environment and take ownership of these spaces.

- Connected with young people in an authentic and meaningful way, rather than simply offering distracting activities.

- Demonstrated to young people that CAMHS considers them important and valued partners in the service, rather than passive recipients.

The project team has ambitious plans to build on this learning to develop streamlined and self-sustaining activities in Years 2 and 3.

Independent researcher Ruth Stevenson evaluated the Young People's Voices project. The mixed-methods methodology for Year 1 comprised: Depth interviews with 7 artists, 3 clinicians, and 2 members of the Arts in Health team, 43 session reflection forms, and 9 clinician impact surveys.

For further information about the Young People's Voices Project contact the Arts In Health Team: ABB.ArtsInHealth@wales.nhs.uk

