Madam Makery Community CIC

CREATING COMMUNITIES

PILOT PROGRAMME

June-July 2026

IMPACT REPORT



MADAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

> *"**I really look forward to Madam Makery** on a Monday **after struggling** through the **long weekend alone.**"*
>
> - Participant in the Creating Communities pilot

Over eight weeks in June and July 2026, Madam Makery ran the Creating Communities pilot programme.

Delivered in partnership with **Mind UK in Tower Hamlets**, the pilot successfully demonstrated that when barriers to accessing creative activities are removed, individuals facing significant health and social challenges can:

- build a sense of **connection and community**
- improve their **mood and wellbeing**
- reclaim their **confidence and creative agency** *and*
- start to develop the tools and motivation necessary to **sustain their own engagement in creative practice and activities**.

We delivered the pilot to **15 participants with low-to-moderate mental health issues**, providing **124 combined hours** of facilitated creative workshops.

The end-of-programme survey shows that our work has immediate and measurable results:

- At the start of the pilot, only 50% of respondents felt a sense of **connection and community** with each other. This **rose to 100% by the end of the pilot**.
- Compared to when they started the programme, **85% reported an improvement in mood and wellbeing**.
- **89%** said that **taking part** in the programme has **changed how they think about creativity** in their life.
- **66.7% felt more confident** doing something creative than before the programme.

These post-pilot impact findings are backed up by weekly surveys, showing that:

- **61%*** felt "very" or "quite" **calm and grounded** during and after sessions *(rising to 97% including those responding "a little").*

- **94%** felt **supported to express themselves creatively** during the workshops.

- **74%** felt **proud of what they created** *(rising to 96% including those responding "a little").*

**this outcome is particularly noticeable, especially for a pilot programme, given the mental health needs of the participants.*

> *"**From the first meeting with Agathe** [Madam Makery facilitator and founder] I knew her **values aligned with [Mind's].** Her **experience and passion to support people with their mental health was evident** as she talked about the programme and the intersection between connecting to the **creativity associated with childhood and reigniting this as adults.** I was hooked!*
>
> *Madam Makery was positively received by clients who benefited from **learning new skills, connecting with others** and motivating them to use art as a way of managing their mental health challenges.*
>
> *Madam Makery and the programme will be welcomed back to Mind Tower Hamlets at any time as the **feedback** from clients **highlights the optimism they feel** after the course ended which is at the forefront of all we do."*
>
> *- Maria Vassiliou,*
> *Mind Tower Hamlets Co-production & Peer development Coordinator*



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Madam Makery Community (MM) is a CIC (limited by guarantee) with three core objectives:

1. **Provide access to creative opportunities and activities** for marginalised groups and individuals who most need it;
2. Enable participants to **connect with others and build creative communities**; *and*
3. Support people to **develop and sustain their own long-term engagement** with creative activities and practices.

MM designed and delivered the Creating Communities programme as an unconventional, joyful, inclusive space designed specifically for individuals who may feel excluded from traditional creative environments due to anxiety, trauma, or accessibility needs. MM ran the pilot pro-bono for Mind UK, with no external funding, in order to test and evaluate the model in a mental-health setting.

The pilot consisted of eight weekly sessions lasting two hours each, with attendance numbers capped to ensure a safe and supportive group dynamic.

Participants accessed a range of different creative media (e.g., clay, embroidery, papier-mâché, collage), with each weekly workshop using playful and accessible prompts and expert facilitation. Workshops mixed together traditional, upcycled, and found materials. Every session was designed with a cathartic intent, using creative acts to process emotion, set boundaries, and liberate self-expression.

The programme curriculum was structured in four parts to enable a progression from introductory exercises and facilitator-led creative exploration to independent artistic agency:

1. INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE PLAY

The first session focused on a mix of warm-up exercises, individual and collective, using simple paper and pencils to break the ice, loosen up, and collaboratively discuss what the programme will look like over its duration.



2. PROMPTED CREATION

Weeks Two through Five centered on themed and prompted workshops, each designed and led by MM to blend catharsis with playfulness.

This approach allows self-expression to emerge organically while removing performance anxiety. By combining traditional media with found or unexpected materials, the sessions encourage participants to view the world with a more creative mindset, recognising and signposting creative potential in everyday items. The themes included:



Radical Sparkle
a workshop using collage and glitter to get familiar with sparkly protest and tactical frivolity;

Get Gargoyling
where participants break perfectionism and sculpt protective clay monsters;

Boundary Embroidery
a meditative session reinforcing personal boundaries through stitching; and

Full Medal Jacket
where participants craft self-awarded trophies to celebrate whatever they choose.

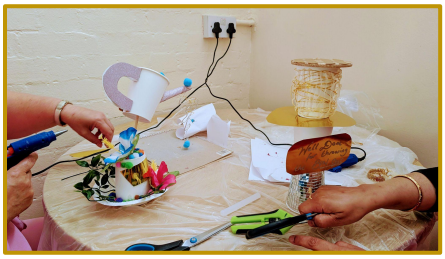
3. SELF-DIRECTED CREATION

Weeks Six and Seven were dedicated to a two-part papier-mâché exploration, allowing participants to build on their acquired skills from Weeks One through Five, and work without predefined prompts. This phase shifts agency to the participant, inviting them to conceive, plan, and execute their own projects over multiple weeks.

This provides the space to experiment and bring a personal vision to completion, with the facilitator acting as a technical guide and sounding board rather than a director.







4. SUSTAINING CREATIVITY

The final session focused on painting the papier-mâché artwork, reflecting on progress over the last seven weeks, and creating a concrete plan for participants to continue creating independently.

Participants developed personalised strategies to maintain their creative momentum, including:

- **Personalised Self-Assessment**: Participants explored the idea that creative habits must adapt to individual personality, ability, and schedule. Whether navigating ADHD, chronic illness, caring responsibilities, or work pressures, the group was invited to identify specific enablers for their own creativity. This process helped distinguish between helpful structure and harmful pressure, ensuring their future practice remains sustainable and supportive.
- **Defining Personal Goals**: Listing 10 or more specific ways they want creativity to show up in the future, from revisiting past hobbies or projects to trying entirely new mediums.
- **Logistical Planning**: Identifying tangible requirements such as booking classes, sourcing materials, or designating a visible space at home for supplies.
- **Habit Building**: Establishing "phone-free" scheduled time blocks to protect the playful self from digital distractions, ensuring materials are ready to use, and leveraging social accountability by planning creative sessions with friends or fellow participants, etc.
- **Resource Mapping**: Curating a list of inspiration sources, including online tutorials, books and creative communities
- **Mindset Shifts**: Reinforcing the belief that creativity is a way of operating rather than a talent, and that "mistakes" are simply part of the process.






IMPACT & EVIDENCE

The following sections present quantitative metrics against **five key outcomes** alongside qualitative feedback to demonstrate the programme's results.

After each weekly session, participants were asked the same set of questions to assess the work's immediate impact. The average results for each question are presented below.

After the eight-week pilot had finished, participants were also asked to complete an end-of-programme survey to track medium-term change and impact. 10/15 participants completed this survey.

1. ACCESSING ARTS & CREATIVITY: REMOVING BARRIERS TO ENTRY

→ **Context:** In the pre-programme survey, all but one participant reported that they considered themselves creative. However, in the same survey:

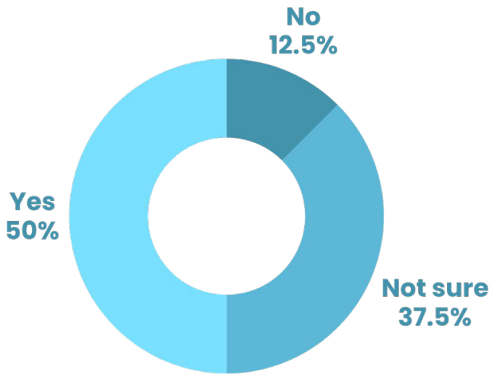
- **more than 60%** said that they **did not know how to access** local creative activities, and
- **33%** engaged creatively **only once or twice a month or less**.

Participants cited barriers such as health conditions (fibromyalgia, arthritis, vision issues), fear of mess, cost, distance, access, and social exclusion:

> *"Being **unable to afford paid activities,** being told that **community groups are full**- all the time, **social exclusion** since I moved to Tower Hamlets"*
>
> *"**High demand** of art classes - less space to join"*
>
> *"**Time** (me time), **material, price"***
>
> *"I have **difficulties going to new place and meeting new people**"*

→ **Output:** The programme delivered **124 combined hours** of fully adapted artistic engagement, directly removing many of the participant-cited barriers by providing a local, free, and fully equipped service.

The end-of-programme survey showed a **50%** increase in perception of accessibility to creativity among participants.



"I feel like creativity is more accessible to me than before this programme"

→ **Participant reflections:**

*" I was glad to **learn a new technique**, to be **part of the group** doing some creative stuff."*

*"Thank you so much for **teaching me how to do embroidery stitches**. My sight and arthritis sometimes affects the activities I can do. **Thank you for your support** Agathe [MM facilitator] and Sarah [Mind UK peer leader]. Look forward to the next session."*

*"I was able to **focus on something creative** rather than sitting in the café."*

2. BUILDING COMMUNITY: CONNECTION & BELONGING

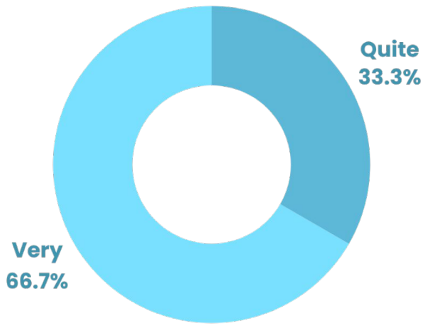
*"I feel **mentally better** and have **bonded** more **with the regular attenders."***

- Creating Communities pilot participant

→ **Context:** Mental health issues often lead to withdrawal and isolation. The sessions became a crucial weekly anchor, responding to the need for human connection cited by many in the pre-survey and reinforced by the qualitative feedback presented throughout this report.

→ **Outcome:** The data reveal a clear upward trajectory in engagement and connection as the cohort bonded, with the community group dynamic providing a crucial sense of belonging.

While only 50% of respondents reported feeling some level of connection in Week 1, by the end of the programme, **100% reported feeling connected to the group and each other**.



"I connected with the group, felt a sense of community"

→ **Participant reflections:**

*"This is definitely my sort of thing- **loved the prompts, enjoyed being in the group**."*

*"Relaxing, **enjoyed being in a group** in a creative setting."*

*"[One highlight of the programme for me was] **meeting kindred spirits**"*

*"[Being part of this group made me feel:] a lot more better socialising in a **safe and happy environment**"*

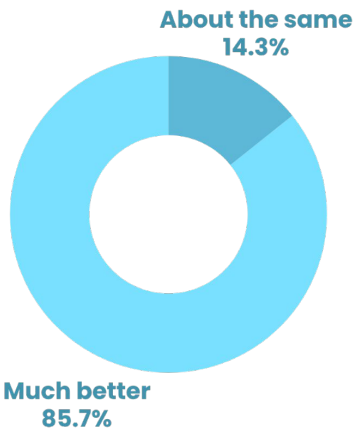
3. IMPROVING WELLBEING: JOY & MOOD REGULATION

"[By the end of the session I felt] like I have control over my life"

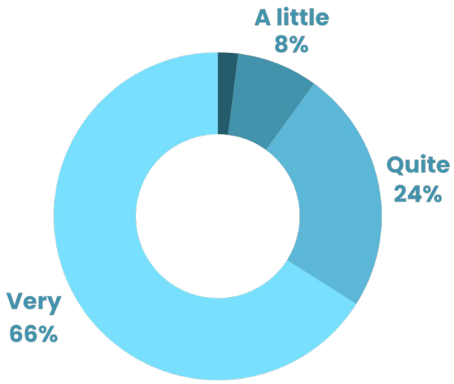
- Creating Communities pilot participant

→ **Context:** Many of the participants started the pilot with high levels of stress and anxiety. The programme provided a reliable space for joy, even during periods of poor health.

→ **Outcome:** When asked, after each session, how they felt compared to when they arrived, **85%** of participants **reported an improvement in wellbeing**; and **98% enjoyed the sessions.**



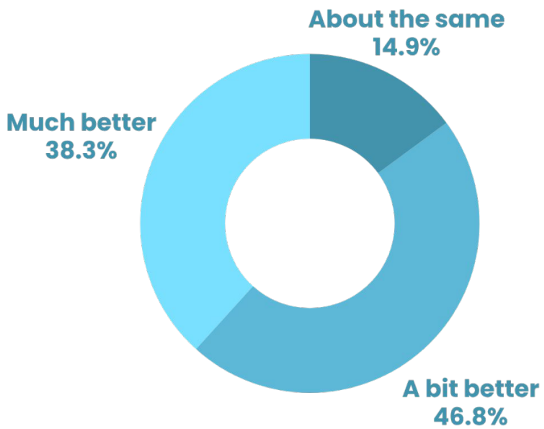
"Right now, compared to when I arrived, I feel"



"I enjoyed today's session"

The end-of-programme survey confirms the **lasting impact** of this intervention. A significant **85.7%** of participants reported feeling **"much better"** overall compared to when they started the programme.

This demonstrates that the weekly sessions did not just provide temporary relief, but contributed to a **sustained improvement in mental wellbeing** over the eight-week period.



"Right now, compared to when I started the programme, I feel"

→ **Participant reflections:**

*"I always feel irritated and restless. **Here I can channel** these emotions in a very proactive and creative way and end up feeling fulfilled instead!"*

*"Thank you so much for today Agathe! I am struggling with my physical and mental health. **I am more confident today.**"*

*"I have been in hospital still unwell but **I had Madam Makery session to look forward to**."*

*"The session was **very therapeutic**"*

*"Today was **beautiful**, bubbly feel good buzz. I came in feeling very unhappy and frustrated, **I came away overexcited!**"*

*"Madam Makery was very helpful today, wasn't in the mood in beginning but **I thoroughly enjoyed it.**"*

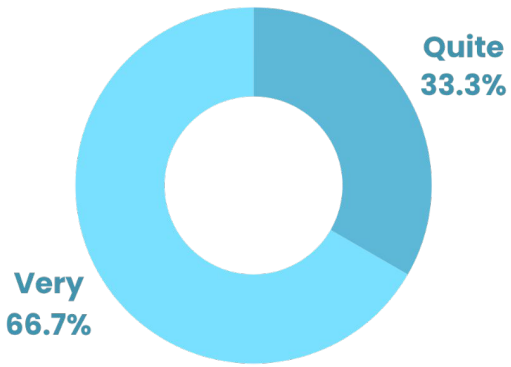
4. GAINING CONFIDENCE: DISMANTLING PERFECTIONISM

*"[My favourite part was] **letting go of "fear" and allowing the imagination to lead the way.**"*

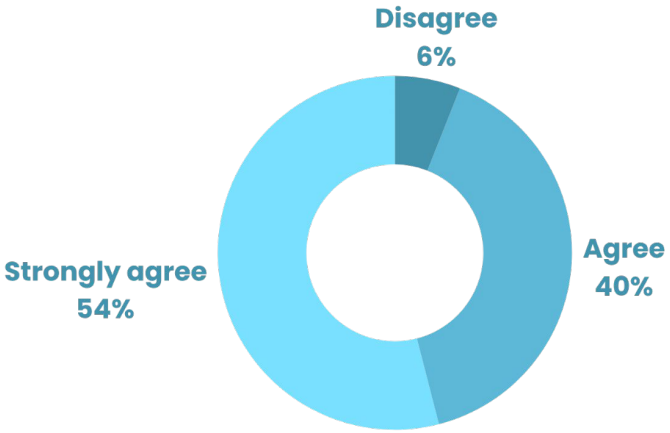
- Creating Communities pilot participant

→ **Context:** Creative blocks often mirror mental health blocks, and can lead to feelings of inadequacy and/or fear of failure. By creating an environment of "safe failure," the programme allowed participants to dismantle performance anxiety.

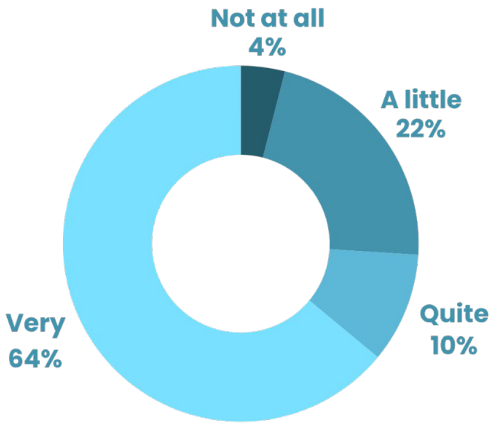
→ **Outcome:** On average, **94% agreed or strongly agreed** they felt **able to express themselves creatively**. This culminated in the end-of-programme survey, where **100%** of respondents **reported feeling more confident** doing something creative than before the programme. Our approach successfully dismantled the "I don't have the skills" barrier, and **reactivated the creative "muscles"**, empowering participants to engage in play without fear.



"I feel more confident doing something creative than before the programme"



"I felt able to express myself creatively today"



"I feel proud of what I made today"

→ **Participant reflections:**

*"I never had confidence with clay yet Agathe **made me feel capable**."*

*"My **anxiety around perfectionism** is **better today**."*

*"Yes, I have come across glittery paper which I have never come across before... Made me feel **more relaxed about making art imperfectly**."*

*"Realising something **grotesque** can be used for **protection**."*

*"Today I felt **fulfilled** and **happy** that I produced something."*

*"Thank you for today! I'm **really enjoying the Madam Makery session**. I've never done paper mache before and look forward to painting my creation next week!"*

*"Even if my process went wrong, **I fixed and adapted.**"*

5. SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT: AUTONOMY & FUTURE PRACTICE

*"I can now be **more free and creative with art.**"*

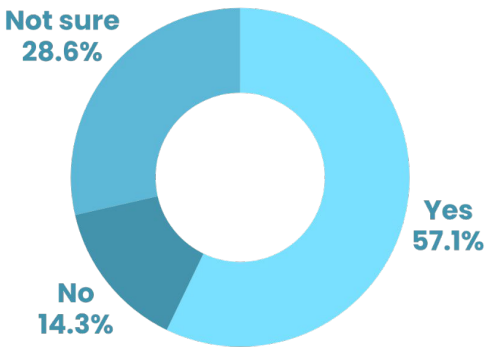
- Creating Communities pilot participant

→ **Context:** The goal was not just immediate enjoyment, but equipping participants with a blueprint for self-regulation and autonomous creativity they could use beyond the programme. Participants showed good attendance retention across the eight-week pilot, and many expressed clear intent to continue independently.

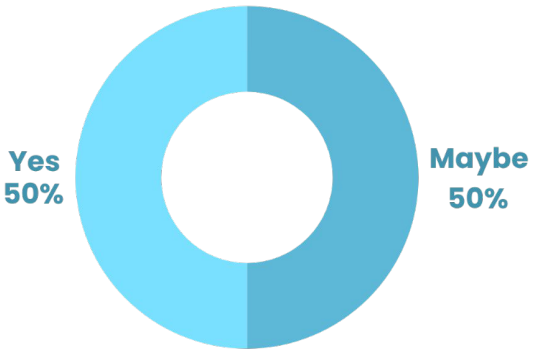
We will run a three-month follow-up survey with participants to gauge whether their creative confidence and frequency of practice have increased since the programme ended, and how deeply these playful techniques have taken root in their routine.

→ **Outcome:** The programme successfully changed participants' relationship with creativity, turning it from a source of pressure into a practical tool for self-care. The average **weekly survey** results showed that **57%** of respondents felt the sessions changed how they feel about being creative, while the **end-of-programme survey** revealed that **89%** reported a lasting change in their relationship with creativity.

50% expressed **immediate motivation** to continue activities (restart new hobbies / explore new creative routes) post-programme.



"Today's session changed how I feel about being creative"



"I have the motivation to continue creative activities after this programme"

→ **Participant reflections:**

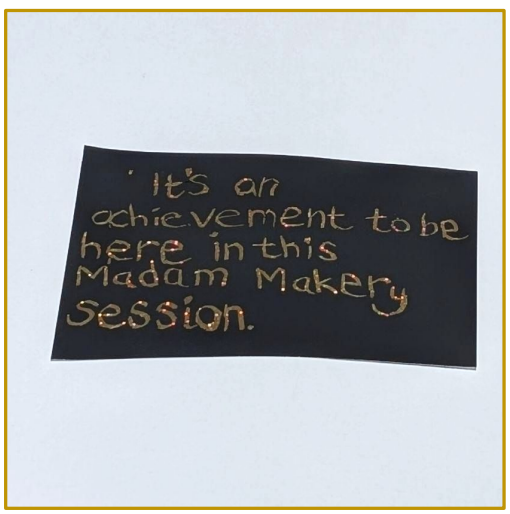
*"**I will continue** [my project] at home when I need to relax or in my chill out time."*

*"Taking part has definitely **changed how I think about creativity in my life**"*

*"I enjoyed doing the embroidery after 30 years. **I will be looking forward to do more embroidery"***

*"This session gave me some **new ideas for creativity**."*







WHY IT WORKED

In addition to the findings outlined above, participant feedback highlighted three specific mechanisms central to the Creating Communities methodology and which underpin our impact:

1. The Madam Makery Method: Absurd Prompts & Mixed Materials
2. Tactile Grounding
3. Inclusive Facilitation and Accessibility

1. THE MADAM MAKERY METHOD: ABSURD PROMPTS & MIXED MATERIALS

> ***"If you remove the fear, you can create."***
>
> *- Creating Communities pilot participant feedback*

Creating Communities' unique angle lies in its deliberate use of absurd, joyful prompts paired with a vast, eclectic mix of supplies to bypass the "inner critic."

Standard art supplies on their own, especially paired with traditional prompts, can subconsciously - even overtly - signal a need for skill or talent, triggering performance anxiety and feelings of insecurity. By contrast, our programme utilises a broad spectrum of materials ranging from traditional mediums to everyday found objects (beer caps, dried leaves, shells, etc.) and playful items (glitter, googly eyes, foam clay, etc.).

This combination serves two psychological functions: it distracts the mind by offering unusual, low-stakes supplies; and it radically lowers the participants' expectations for themselves.

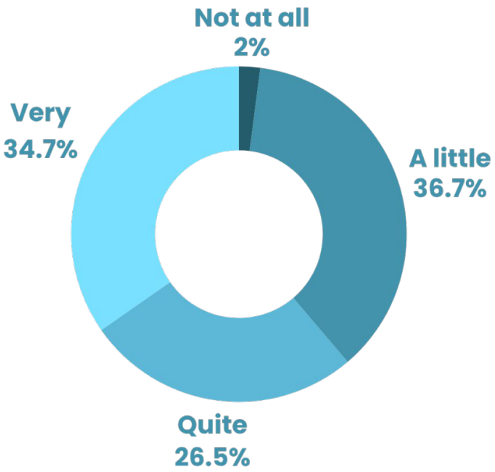
When working with candy wrappers or a handful of glitter, the brain stops asking "Is this good art?" and starts asking "What can I make with this?" This shift allows participants to forget what art is supposed to entail and enter a childlike state of play more easily, where experimentation is the only goal.



2. TACTILE GROUNDING

*"**Extremely enjoyable** as well as **extremely therapeutic.**"*

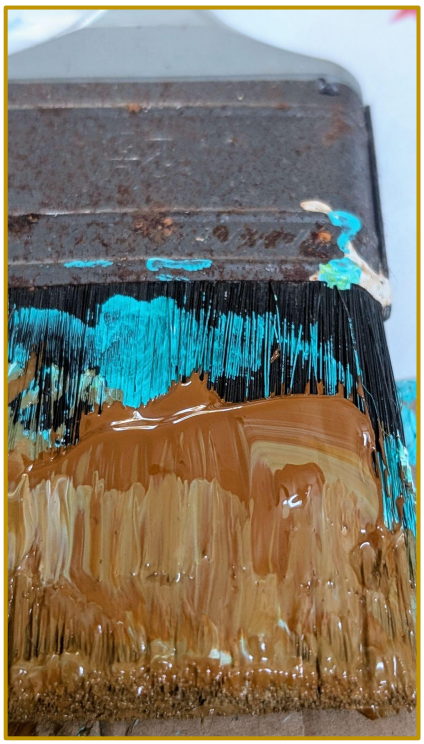
- Creating Communities pilot participant feedback



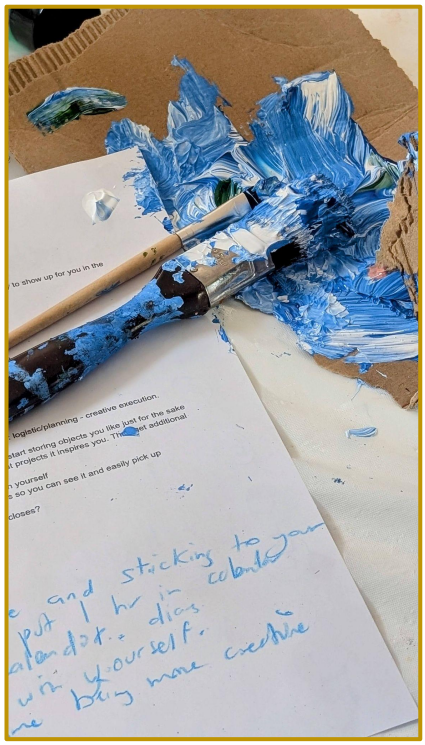
"I felt calm, grounded or relaxed during the session"

Every session started with a short box-breathing exercise to calm the nervous system and help everyone get grounded.

Tactile activities directly contributed to physiological regulation and anxiety reduction, forcing a disconnect from ruminative thoughts, and allowing participants to focus on the physical sensation of making. Following this, **61%** reported feeling quite or very calm, grounded, or relaxed during the session.







3. INCLUSIVE FACILITATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The programme removed many physical barriers to entry, reducing risk of exclusion due to disability. Material adaptations included ergonomic spring-action scissors for arthritis and prehension issues, magnifying lamps for sight issues and fibromyalgia, and gloves for those reluctant to touch materials bare-handed.

Beyond providing the above, we employed a person-centred, non-hierarchical approach in our facilitation. This meant actively adapting prompts to align with participants' cultural or personal values, stepping in with patience when pain or frustration arose, and maintaining a joyful, low-pressure atmosphere that prioritised comfort and self-expression over output. This supportive presence ensured that physical limitations or anxiety never became barriers to participation.

→ Participant reflections:

*"**Thank you for your support** Agathe and Sarah. My sight and arthritis sometimes affects the activities I can do."*

*" [a highlight was] How **supportive** Agathe is as I struggle to make things. Also, **adjusting the session to include my faith.**"*

*"Nice to be in a group with **facilitators who encourage us all.**"*

*"I love Agathe's personality. She **adapted session to meet my needs**. Clay work, I really enjoy. I struggle with pain and **Agathe stepped in when I was stuck.** Thank you so much **really needed this session.**"*

*"The facilitator Agathe is so friendly and easy going **I really enjoy working with clay.**"*

*"The facilitator was really **good and patient."***

*"The whole session was **joyful** and I **didn't want it to end,** it was **well considered** very factual sessions **easy projects and fun.**"*



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

Based on facilitator observations and participant feedback, the following adjustments will enable us to deliver even more impact and scalability in future programme delivery.

1. MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY AND COMMUNICATION

Users highlighted the value of the sessions as a weekly anchor that starts their week well: protecting the specific time slot is crucial for routine-building.

Initial pilot recruitment targeted 15 participants to buffer against anticipated drop-outs. Recorded reasons for some attendance fluctuation week-by-week included medical appointments, scheduling conflicts, school holidays, extreme weather (heatwaves), and interpersonal dynamics within the group.

Feedback from Mind suggests running the programme earlier in the year (avoiding late July) may improve attendance and participant energy, due to hot weather and summer holidays.

To further safeguard attendance, clear and redundant communication of session times between delivery partners is essential. A first meeting and assessment with participants might also help with establishing what the programme is about, and ensuring this is in line with what potential participants are looking for and are ready to sustain at this moment in their life.







2. DEEPEN TRAUMA-INFORMED & CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Building on the adaptive, cathartic approach already demonstrated in the pilot, future delivery within a mental health setting will formalise these principles in session design. This includes:

- **Faith & Cultural Sensitivity:** Proactively checking for religious observances or cultural needs (e.g., specific material or themes taboos) during intake and adapting sessions accordingly.
- **Trigger Awareness & Alternatives:** Recognising that certain prompts or materials may inadvertently trigger distress. We will develop a library of alternative, low-stakes prompts that participants can swap to instantly if a main activity feels too exposing or difficult. The initial assessment mentioned above will also support with this.
- **Cathartic Curriculum Design:** The pilot successfully used themes of protest, protection, boundary-setting and self-celebration. We will expand this and keep ensuring every prompted project explicitly offers a cathartic core - focusing on release or emotional processing - while providing varied entry points so participants can choose the level of emotional depth they are comfortable with on any given day.

3. DOUBLE DOWN ON ACCESSIBILITY

The high satisfaction scores among participants with physical limitations, including arthritis, fibromyalgia, and sight loss, prove that adaptive tools are not optional, but essential to the programme's success. Additional investment in ergonomic tools and sensory adaptations will ensure the programme remains truly inclusive and continues to expand its reach to diverse needs.

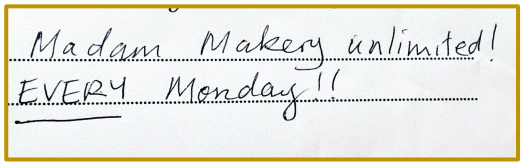






ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIALS

The testimonials below include feedback gathered directly by Mind through their mid-programme participant survey.



*"**You make my Monday happy!**"*

*"Keep getting funding + do **more courses** for us to enjoy with thanks"*

*"Yes, I haven't learnt something new since secondary school. There were new **materials** that **I never came across before**"*

*"Today was **fun** and **joyful**, the project made me **laugh**"*

*"It **makes my day** + starts my week well"*

*"My trophy recognised the **importance of sharing joyous moments** with strangers or a friend"*

*"It was a **very creative** lesson which is a **great distraction** from thinking about negative things"*

*"**Relaxed**, good pace, **structured well**"*

*"[By the end of the session I felt] **Alive** and **successful** + **fulfilled**"*

*"Thank you so much for facilitating Madam Makery. **So much fun!** Recovering from illness it has **helped so much** to take my mind off pain. I look forward for **more sessions of Madam Makery**"*

*"[a highlight was] The awareness of **expressive enthusiasm** and encouragement to try everything"*

*"[a highlight was] The **friendliness** of Agathe and group members"*

*"I think it was **brilliant**, would like there to be another 8-week session definitely in the winter, thank you for these sessions, **it helps me feel better**"*

*"Sad that today is the last session. Look forward to **more Madam Makery.**"*

Contact