

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

CoCreate is a creative health provider. We are an artist, and lived experience led organisation, that delivers creative activities designed to support adult mental health and wellbeing, through making and learning about art.

We follow the 8 principles of the Creative Health Quality Framework; Person-centred, equitable, safe, creative, collaborative, realistic, reflective, sustainable.

April 24 – March 25.

CoCreate continued to provide valued Creative Health opportunities to children and adults with mental health and wellbeing needs.

The objectives of the Company are to deliver activities which benefit the community. In financial year 2024/25 we have met these through: raising funds and undertaking commissions, providing creative health activities and consultancy services that focus on collaborative arts-based activities. Through this we have supported individuals facing mental health challenges, social isolation, and barriers to participation.

Our flagship initiatives during the year included:

Create:Connect . Our first year of delivery as part of a two-year funding award enabled us to provide this regular programme of free short creative courses open to people who in mental health recovery. In addition, we attracted additional funding investment, allowing us to widen our reach and build on our established model. This will support us to roll out new courses in the wider Dorset area.

This **Create:Connect** programme of accessible creative courses supporting mental health recovery and social connection had a number of strands, including theatre, visual arts, online and taster sessions. We delivered 5 x 8-week courses face to face, a weekly on-line course plus taster sessions. We supported 105 participants across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council area, and Dorset including, Bridport, Dorchester and Weymouth. A new development saw a volunteer working alongside one of our artists to support the delivery of 2 of these 8-week courses

94% of participants reported improved mental wellbeing.

100% of participants would recommend the programme to a friend.

Elevate – In partnership with ArtCare, we provided weekly one-to-one and small group creative sessions for 147 patients at Victoria Hospital, Wimborne, and 25 patients at our monthly sessions at Salisbury District Hospital which we started half-way through the year. These sessions provided comfort,

conversation, and meaningful engagement for individuals in healthcare settings.

Hands Together / WDDA Deaf Arts Programme – We worked with the Wiltshire and Dorset Deaf Association (WDDA) to deliver monthly arts socials at **Bournemouth Deaf Club**. Our target participant group is members of the Deaf community, who mainly use British Sign Language who are likely to experience social isolation. These sessions have become increasingly popular, with attendance at one session reaching 53 people. On average we have 15 to 20 people per event participating in the activities we offer. Many more attend the sessions to socialise and communicate with other members of the Deaf / BSL community. We have worked with around 165 people throughout the year.

We also led weekly creative sessions for the **Dorset Deaf Activities Group** in Dorchester. This is a group of around 12 Deaf / BSL users who come together to socialise and focus on art and creative practice. These projects enabled creative expression, peer connection, and access to the arts for members of the Deaf community. Dorset Museum provided a new accessible venue at no cost, reinforcing mutual benefit through inclusive collaboration. One of our artists can use BSL (qualified to level 3) and we are also supported by 3 signing support workers.

Creativity, Nature and the 5 Ways to Wellbeing – A nature-based creative programme in collaboration with Parks in Mind (a project of The Parks Foundation). 45 people attended a 6-week course. Despite challenges with attendance, feedback from regular participants highlighted the therapeutic and reflective value of the sessions.

Talbot Village Trust Seasonal Events – We facilitated creative workshops and storytelling activities at family events. These events marked the solstices and equinoxes with around 200 people attending / participating in activities over 3 events. These intergenerational gatherings fostered community cohesion, creative play, and celebration in accessible outdoor settings.

Other work: In addition, we've been able to do important relationship building with health, and access wellbeing services. This raises awareness of Creative Health, helps us develop services, and informs staff to make appropriate referrals.

All Activity

Across the year, CoCreate delivered over **200** creative sessions, reaching **499** individuals and working in partnership with over **10** community organisations including Dorset Museum, Dorset Community Foundation, Community Action Network, Parks in Mind, Lighthouse Poole, Victoria Hospital Wimborne, the Powerhouse Poole, Salisbury District Hospital, Wiltshire and Dorset Deaf Association, Dorset Deaf Activities Group and Talbot Village Trust.

Our work has supported individuals experiencing mental health issues, isolation, or disability by providing creative spaces that build confidence, connection, and joy.

Participant feedback consistently affirms the life-enhancing and community-strengthening impact of our work.

Participants benefitted in the following ways:

- Engagement in a range of arts activities: “Theatre is completely different to anything I've been involved in before. It was very interesting to learn about it, and to do the activities. I became more confident as the weeks went on which made me feel better about myself” (Theatre participant)
- Expressing ideas, thoughts and feelings: “I have learned how to be creative with what I have to hand. Being creative is a state of mind and it has helped me to feel better.” (Visual Arts participant)
- Learning new skills and developing knowledge: “I’m so pleased with it! I didn’t know that I was capable of this, it’s so lovely”. (Elevate participant)
- Social ease and connectedness “Thank you for coming I’ve enjoyed it immensely I’ve been looking forward to you coming”; (Elevate participant)
- Being with and connecting with others “Art is the one time of the week that I get to interact with other people as I'm stuck to being at home most of the time. “(Creativity, Nature & 5 ways to wellbeing participant)

Participants reported improvements in:

- Health and wellbeing: “So happy that this course is provided it has kept me going through dark times when I did not believe in myself and suffer with work placed anxieties.” (Creative Community participant)
- Social ease and connectedness: “Without the course and meeting others online I would not have any other way of meeting people.” Creative Community participant)
- General improved confidence: ‘I am amazed. I Never thought I’d do what I set out to do and I did.’ (Visual Art participant)
- Sense of achievement, and increase of knowledge in the arts:” I found it hard to do the abstract art but I enjoyed using different techniques. I will carry on now using the art materials I have at home. “ ; “I have learned to love the creative process more than the outcome. The outcome then becomes a celebration of achievement to learn from, rather than intangible goals which shift and leave me feeling pressured and anxious.” (Visual Art participants)

CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

CoCreate Dorset CIC recognises the importance of listening to and working collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholders to ensure our programmes are meaningful, responsive, and inclusive. Our stakeholders include:

- **Participants** in our creative programmes (including individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges, isolation, and disability)
- **Partner organisations and community groups**, such as Mind, The Lantern Trust, Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA), Millbrook Healthcare and Wiltshire and Dorset Deaf Association (WDDA)
- **Community (VCS) Organisations**, including Community Action Network, Help & Kindness, BHCA, The Lantern Trust
- **Health & Social Care partners**, including Salisbury and Wimborne hospitals, NHS teams, Social Prescribing Link Workers, PCNs (Primary Care Networks), and Access Wellbeing services
- **Cultural and community organisations**, such as Dorset Museum, Lighthouse Poole, Powerhouse Poole, Talbot Village Trust, and Parks in Mind
- **Local charities and support networks**
- **Funders & Commissioners**, including the Postcode Lottery, National Lottery Community Fund, Talbot Village Trust, and the Community Wellbeing and Mental Health Fund managed by Dorset Community Foundation (DCF)

We regularly consult stakeholders through both formal and informal means, including:

- Participant **feedback forms**, reflective exercises, and one-to-one conversations during and after sessions
- **Partner meetings** and collaborative project design sessions
- Artist reflection logs and team evaluation days
- Regular engagement with **social prescribing teams, Access Wellbeing Hubs**, and sector networks
- **Case studies** and session observations
- Attendance and facilitation at networking and development events such as those run by the BCP Cultural Compact

Stakeholder consultation is integral to our development, and we're delighted that we've been able to make progress in the period on our ambitions to develop formalised and supported ways for participants to contribute to the leadership of the organisation.

Our **Participant Advisory Group** is comprised of individuals with lived experience who have taken part in our workshops and programmes over a number of years. This group provides direct feedback on our offer and how we deliver it, allowing us to shape our future approach collaboratively and responsively.

Feedback from this group has already been rich and multifaceted.

Participants described feeling joy, peace, calm, empowerment, and a sense of community. Many noted that CoCreate offers connection without a focus on

clinical diagnosis or therapy – supporting emotional wellbeing through creative engagement in a safe and inclusive space. CoCreate is perceived as accessible to a wide range of people, particularly those experiencing isolation, recovery, or ongoing mental health challenges.

Themes raised in consultation include:

- A desire for more varied creative activities
- The importance of social connection and safe, welcoming spaces.
- Preference for programmes that emphasise creativity rather than focusing explicitly on mental health.
- A need for structure and commitment, balanced with flexibility and choice.
- The value of progression and leadership opportunities (e.g. teaching, mentoring, volunteering).
- The impact of creative participation on confidence, social inclusion, and recovery.

Participants highlighted that CoCreate offers a vital space where people feel “respected, included and safe.” They noted it supports those in crisis, in recovery, and those seeking to maintain their wellbeing. Creative practice enables mindfulness and emotional regulation in ways that feel accessible and empowering, contrasting with some traditional mental health services that may feel clinical or triggering.

In response to this consultation includes:

- Looking at how future business planning can support new art forms and cross-disciplinary creative programmes.
- Committing to maintain online and virtual access for those who cannot attend in person.
- Plan to increase support for informal social time before and after sessions.
- Co-design clearer journeys for progression including volunteering, mentoring, and leadership roles.
- Enhancing signposting and referral pathways through our partners including social prescribers.
- Continuing to co-develop projects with our Advisory Group to ensure our offer remains relevant, inclusive, and meaningful.

This approach ensures that CoCreate remains rooted in the lived experiences and aspirations of its communities, while working in partnership with the wider health, care, and cultural sectors to deliver impactful creative health initiatives.