

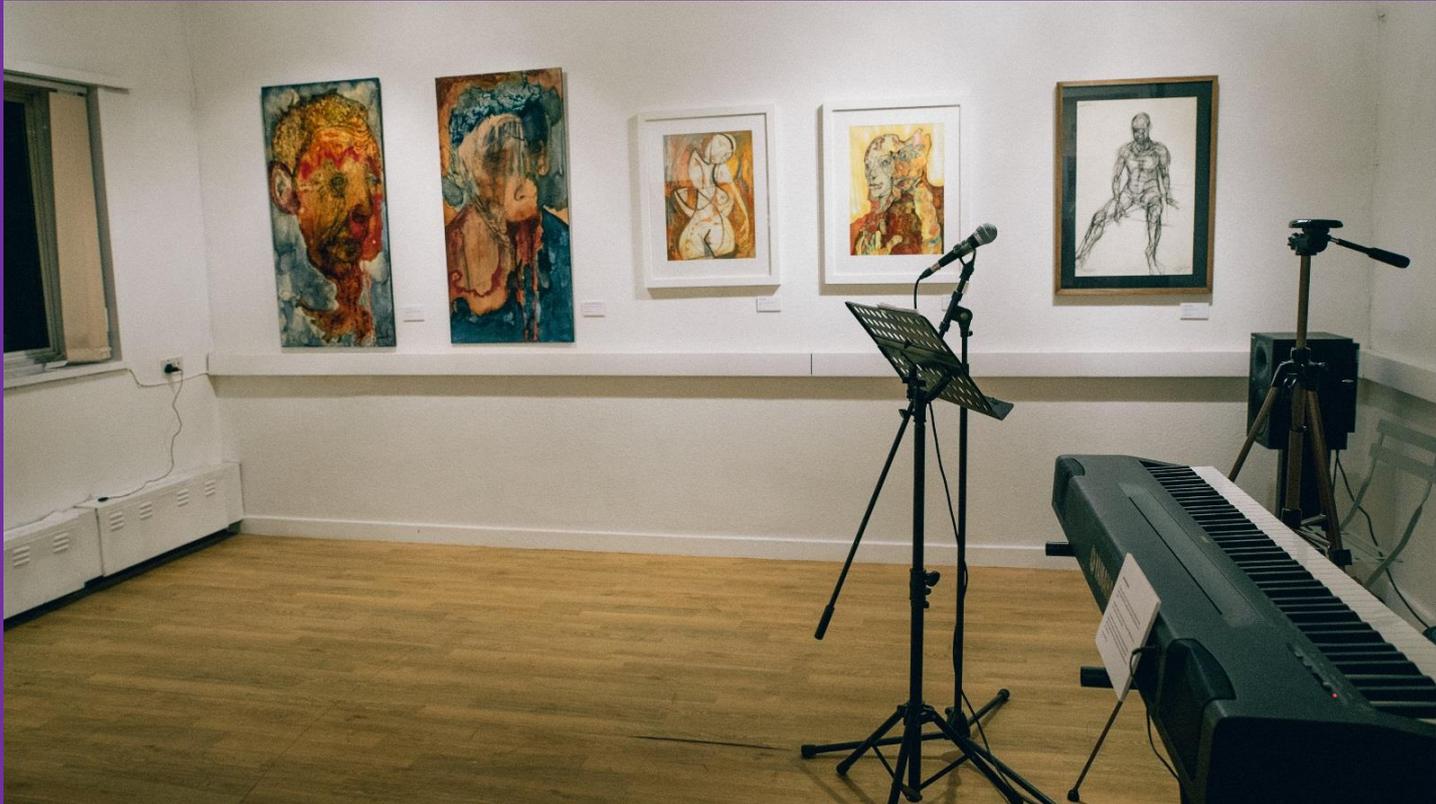


“The beauty of being an ‘outsider’”

An action research evaluation of the Creativity, Resilience, Enablement and Wellbeing (CREW) programme facilitated by Outsider Gallery London

By Dr. Rachel Jane Liebert (r.liebert@uel.ac.uk), Nana Dameah Acheampong-Sah, Dr. Mike Chase, Janet Chimwayange, Hannah Gabriela French, Daria Anna Janik, Nick Jobber, Dr. Laura McGrath, Carina Gomes Monteiro, Charles Chitoo Nnakwue, Dr. Tehseen Noorani, Kayleigh Rashbrook & Oriana Tekleab

Clinical and Community Psychology, University of East London
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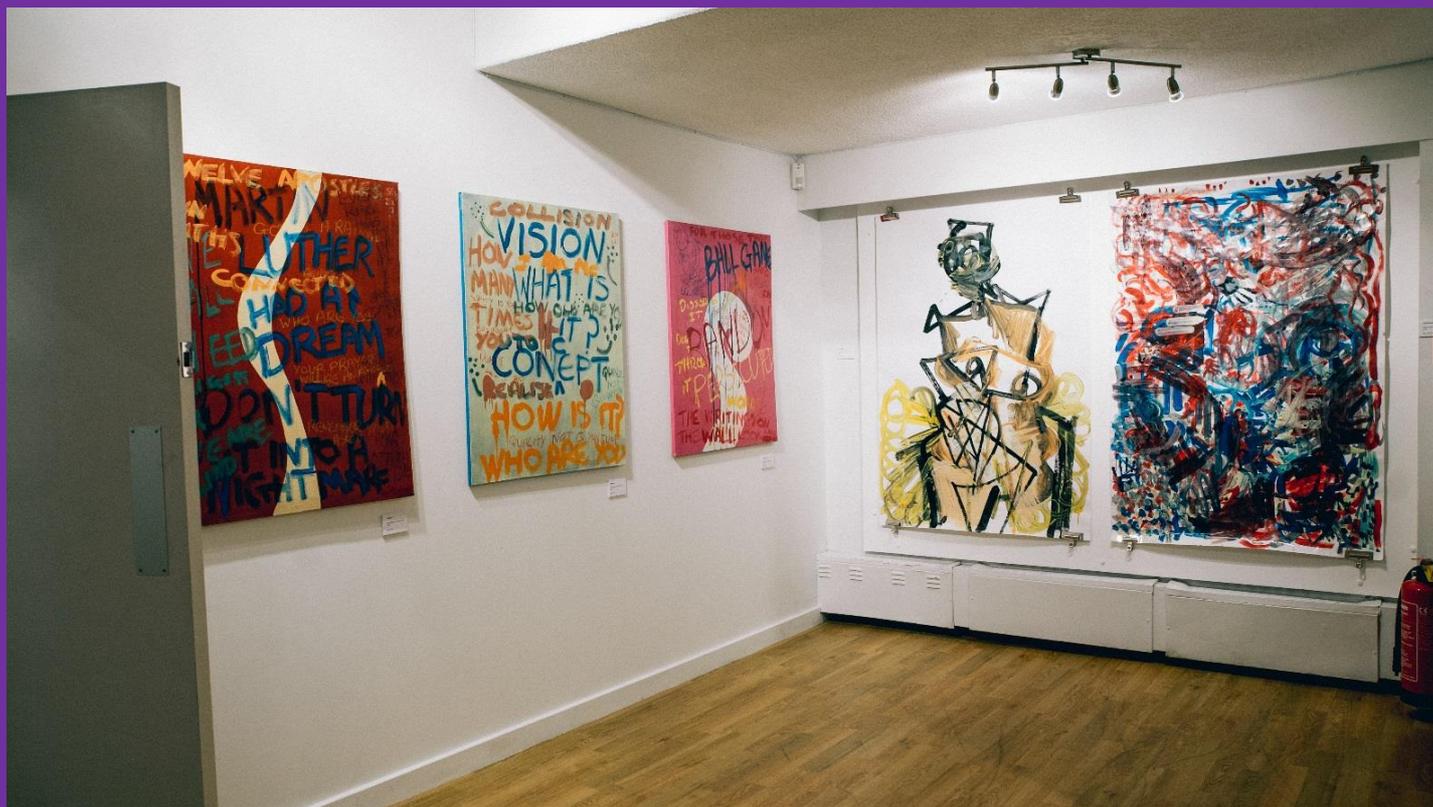
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Background

Creativity, Resilience, Enablement and Wellbeing – or 'CREW' – is a pilot art and music programme for people who have experienced distress, madness and/or mental health services in North London. Hosted by Outsider Gallery London and facilitated at Clarendon Recovery College in Haringey, from 2016-2017 three cohorts of adults and young people chose to participate in the programme through referral or self-referral. Through a praxis particularly attentive to a responsive *space*, the expression of *self*, relationality and *support*, and the telling of *stories*, participants were guided through weekly, one-hour 1:1 and group sessions for ten weeks before being invited to showcase the art and music that they produced to service-providers and community members through an evening of exhibitions and performances.

Questions

This evaluation examines how CREW affected individuals, services and the community, and what makes CREW distinctive from clinically-led services.

Method

We undertook a mixed-methods ethnographic action research evaluation; collecting quantitative and qualitative data while simultaneously participating in the programme and continually reflecting on how to improve the evaluation process. This report draws on data collected from 75 post-session responses from CREW participants, 11 interviews with CREW participants and 113 reflections from service-providers and community members who attended the showcases. A concerted effort was made to prioritise these voices over those of the evaluators. As such the findings focused on organising data into recurring themes, while including as many direct quotes from participants, service-providers and community members as possible.

Findings

First, CREW made **a space for participants to experience *expression***. The creative process led to feelings of confidence, pride and enjoyment that came with a sense of productivity and accomplishment. In addition, it afforded the opportunity for people to express themselves within a context of clinically-led services that might otherwise limit experiences. In turn, participants spoke powerfully about the programme's capacity to positively intervene on, if not prevent, their distress and madness through not only the opportunity to express feelings that might otherwise be overwhelming, but also the freeing and comforting atmosphere provided by CREW itself.

Second, CREW made **a space for participants to experience *imagination***. Enabled to get 'outside' of their everyday, people could reimagine themselves as well as the role and potential of their voice in the world, opening their sense of what they and the world could be – including mental health services. With regard to this, participants consistently requested for more CREW, or programmes like CREW, in which they were made to feel like an integral part of the therapeutic process for both themselves and others.

Third, CREW made **a space for participants to experience *collectivity***. Participants spoke at length about the positive effects of the friendships and camaraderie developed over the programme and thus a sense of being a part of something bigger than themselves. They considered this to be particularly significant given their experiences of distress and madness that could otherwise lead to isolation. Moreover, allowed to have their participation take on diverse forms while working towards a shared project, participants expressed a sense of their own uniqueness and agency within this collective.

Fourth, CREW made **a space for service-providers and community members to experience and appreciate *community***. People expressed immense enjoyment during the CREW showcases and spoke of a supportive atmosphere that allowed them to reflect on the importance of community in mental health and in general. In turn they engaged their own social responsibility as well as the value of difference and diversity – including with regard to the humanity of experiences of distress and madness.

Fifth, CREW made **a space for service-providers and community members to experience and appreciate *creativity***. People consistently made references to the quality of the art and music on show, thus engaging with the artists and musicians as artists and musicians – interrupting a focus on distress and madness that can otherwise dominate perceptions of people who use mental health services, and leading to broader reflections on the power and importance of art and music in the lives of both themselves and others.

Sixth, CREW made **a space for service-providers and community members to experience and appreciate *healing***. People's connections with, or reflections on, the art and music suggested that the CREW showcase enabled them to not just witness but feel things that might usually be unspoken in or silenced by society. In turn, they expressed a recurring respect for the artists and musicians while simultaneously making them reflect on their own relationship to distress and madness. It followed that people also commented on the need for CREW to continue as a unique alternative to clinically-led services as it was thought to not only improve but save lives while simultaneously promoting and relieving the other NHS providers.

Together, these findings suggest that CREW is distinct from clinically-led services as participants,

1. experience confidence, pride and enjoyment, including a sense of accomplishment
2. feel free to, and comfortable with, expressing themselves
3. are able to see their own and each other's capacity and potential
4. come to know that their voice matters
5. make friends, support each other, work together and feel part of a collective, and
6. happily become actively involved in the process.

In addition, CREW is distinct from clinically-led services as service-providers and community members,

7. have their expectations challenged
8. commit to community
9. value diversity
10. see people as more than their diagnoses
11. respect people who experience distress and madness

12. witness and feel unspoken or silenced experiences, and
13. do not 'other' people who experience distress and madness.

In sum, by making a space for participants to experience expression, imagination and collectivity, and for service-providers and community members to experience and appreciate community, creativity and healing, **CREW is an empowering, de-stigmatising and transformative programme with the potential to make a remarkable therapeutic and social impact that is highly distinct from other clinical services.**

Recommendations

Given the above potential, we strongly recommend that CREW be resourced to not only continue, but grow. However, rather than being treated as a 'model' that can be standardised, CREW needs to be recognised as a *mode of engagement* that requires attentive and responsive facilitation. In the shorter term, this could be the development of an apprenticeship approach that enables future facilitators to learn from current facilitators on a 1:1 basis. However in the longer term **CREW should be resourced to develop a 'facilitate the facilitator' programme**, allowing multiple practitioners within mental health to learn their mode of engagement through a sustained experiential and reflective process.

As CREW continues and grows, we further recommend the following:

1. CREW **continues both the sessions and the showcases** – it is the combination of these that makes CREW particularly potent and unique.
2. Ideally, the CREW **sessions are based in a community space**, physically outside of clinically-led services. If this is not possible, then CREW facilitators need to be supported to change the space they are given in ways that are conducive to their mode of engagement.
3. CREW considers how to make more opportunities for more collective dialogue between participants, perhaps using this to **experiment with innovative modes of peer support** that focus on not only individual recovery but social analysis and change.
4. CREW strengthens their participatory elements by supporting participants to become decision-makers and knowledge-producers with regard to how the programme is run. This could be done through **the establishment of an advisory group of past participants** – a kind of 'CREW crew'.
5. The potential of the sessions to **facilitate participatory research on mental health** through creative methodologies, and the showcases to disseminate this, is recognised and resourced.
6. The showcases continue to be community-based and accessible to the public. However, as they grow in reputation and/or size, **the showcases must remain 'grassroots'** – that is, driven by the needs and desires of CREW participants.
7. The **anti-discrimination and social change potential of the showcases is recognised**, resourced and used to inform mainstream mental health campaigning.

Appendices

This report ends with two poems from student researchers involved in this evaluation. The first summarises the evaluation findings, the second is a manifesto describing how their involvement with CREW has positively changed their approach to being a psychologist. We include these as further testimony to the potential of CREW to affect positive individual, professional and social change.



Creativity, Resilience, Enablement and Wellbeing – or ‘CREW’ – is a pilot art and music programme for people who have experienced distress, madness and/or mental health services in North London. Hosted by Outsider Gallery London and facilitated at Clarendon Recovery College in Haringey, from 2016-2017 three cohorts of adults and young people chose to participate in the programme through referral or self-referral. Each were guided through weekly, one-hour 1:1 and group sessions for ten weeks before being invited to showcase the art and music that they produced to the community through an evening of exhibitions and performances.

When describing the aims and process of CREW in an interview prior to this evaluation, facilitators Ben Wakeling and Jon Hall spoke of four core elements – a responsive *space*, the expression of *self*, relationality and *support*, and the telling of *stories* – as briefly introduced below.

1a. A responsive space

I think people say when you take on these...your sort of casting something in stone but you can't really do that with creativity, you have to sort of respond to the people that are coming and how they work. (Jon)

Everyone deals with their mental health very individually, so two with bipolar would be two very different people...and you throw creativity into the mix with that as well and it's very difficult to determine, "Right that's your box, that's your box, that's your box and that ticks it all". (Ben)

Both Ben and Jon spoke of the importance of creating an alternative physical and pedagogical space. Ben spoke of how a restrictive and fearful environment can dominate clinically-led services, and therefore the meaningfulness of CREW creating "a very safe studio where people could come in and be honest" – where there are "instruments around" and "paper around", where it's "okay to drop paint on the floor". While Ben has tried implementing a "more structured" programme, he soon found that he needed to be more "flexible" and "responsive" while maintaining a consistent "spine" throughout. As Jon likewise noted, "obviously there is a structured way that whole thing is meant to pan out, but as a secondary thing that's going on we have an exploratory relationship that works in a more emergent fashion as well". As exemplified in the opening quotes to this section, both Ben and Jon spoke about how

this kind of responsive space is particularly necessary because they are working not only with creativity, but with people who are having diverse and dynamic experiences of distress and madness.

Ib. The expression of self

Creating a responsive space also means “trying to put the person first” (Ben), centring their needs and desires from the first session onwards. For both Ben and Jon, part of the power of creative practice is to allow people to *both* explore *and* explode their sense of self. In terms of exploration, Ben spoke of how “generating self awareness” is a “powerful” and “scary” moment to be in but, if achieved, can help to turn things around for an individual. In terms of explosion, Jon noted how filming can allow people to “see their ‘well selves’” reflected back, and while performance can be “scary” the process allows people to “take on a new identity”, a “different option for how they might see themselves” so that “I’m not just somebody with mental health issues”. This process occurs in parallel within the art sessions – as Ben noted at the beginning of the programme, “people always say they can’t sing, they can’t draw...”.

Ic. Relationality and support

Thirdly, CREW offers innovative modes of relationality and support. Happening in a community setting (rather than in hospitals), means the programme enables people to feel “back in it” (Ben) – something that is also enacted through the public showcase events. For Ben, it’s also “building a relationship with someone”, “having people turn up, the same people attending sessions” that is a “measure of success”. This kind of engagement also allows for a dropping of “authoritative barriers” (Ben) that can otherwise impede the healing process, and instead inviting and respecting people’s expertise. More broadly, both Ben and Jon aim to build “a culture of peer support” (Jon). While this aspiration is at-risk of becoming institutionalised within clinically-led services, peer support has the scope to take on an innovative form within CREW given the creative nature of the programme. For example, as Jon notes, CREW can be about “setting up a way for people to talk to each other through music” – a form of “sharing”, “connecting”, “bonding” without having to use words.

Id. The telling of stories

Lastly, CREW invites people to “really tell their story” (Ben) through art and music. Whether recording one’s “voice” (Jon), or being able to “hang work on the wall” (Ben), this telling not only lets people know that their lives matter (literally – for their stories are materialised into music and art pieces), but also invites people to witness, understand and shape their experiences individually and collectively, creating the conditions for empowerment.

These four elements – *space*, *self*, *support* and *stories* – enable CREW to sustain an ethical and engaged practice without imposing a standardised ‘model’ that would otherwise threaten the therapeutic and innovative essence of the programme. The evaluation that follows sought to explore how this approach affected individuals, services and the community, and in doing so makes CREW distinct from other clinical services.



Overall, this evaluation was guided by two overarching questions, producing a two-tiered project that addressed both the outcomes and process of CREW via four sub-questions, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Research questions

Type of evaluation	Overarching Questions	Sub-Questions
Outcome	What does CREW do?	1. How are individuals affected by their experiences in CREW?
		2. How are services affected by their encounter with CREW?
		3. How is the community affected by the work of CREW?
Process	How does CREW do it?	4. What makes CREW distinct from clinically-led services?



We deployed a mixed-methods ethnographic methodology, collecting quantitative and qualitative data while simultaneously participating in the programme. This evaluation also committed to an 'action research' ethos¹, enabling us to shape the research process as CREW progressed and remain responsive to the dynamics of the programme. In line with this, early on it became clear that standardised outcome measures were not able to capture the relational achievements of CREW, and so were not of use in evaluating the four tenets of the programme captured in the introduction².

Table 2 lists the data used for this final report. All qualitative data were converted to a transcript with identifying information removed, before undergoing a thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in their semantic and latent content³. Given the high number of service-providers that attended the community events, we decided to combine the second and third sub-questions into "How are services and communities affected by their encounter with CREW?", and the fourth sub-question – "What makes CREW distinct from other clinical services?" – was ascertained from the analysis of the other three. Both of these changes are depicted in the structure of the Findings section below. Note that all names are pseudonyms and there has been some strategic 'scrambling' of extracts in order to protect people's identity as much as possible. In addition, the Findings section has been presented with as many quotes as possible in order to forefront the voices of the participants, service-providers and community members themselves.

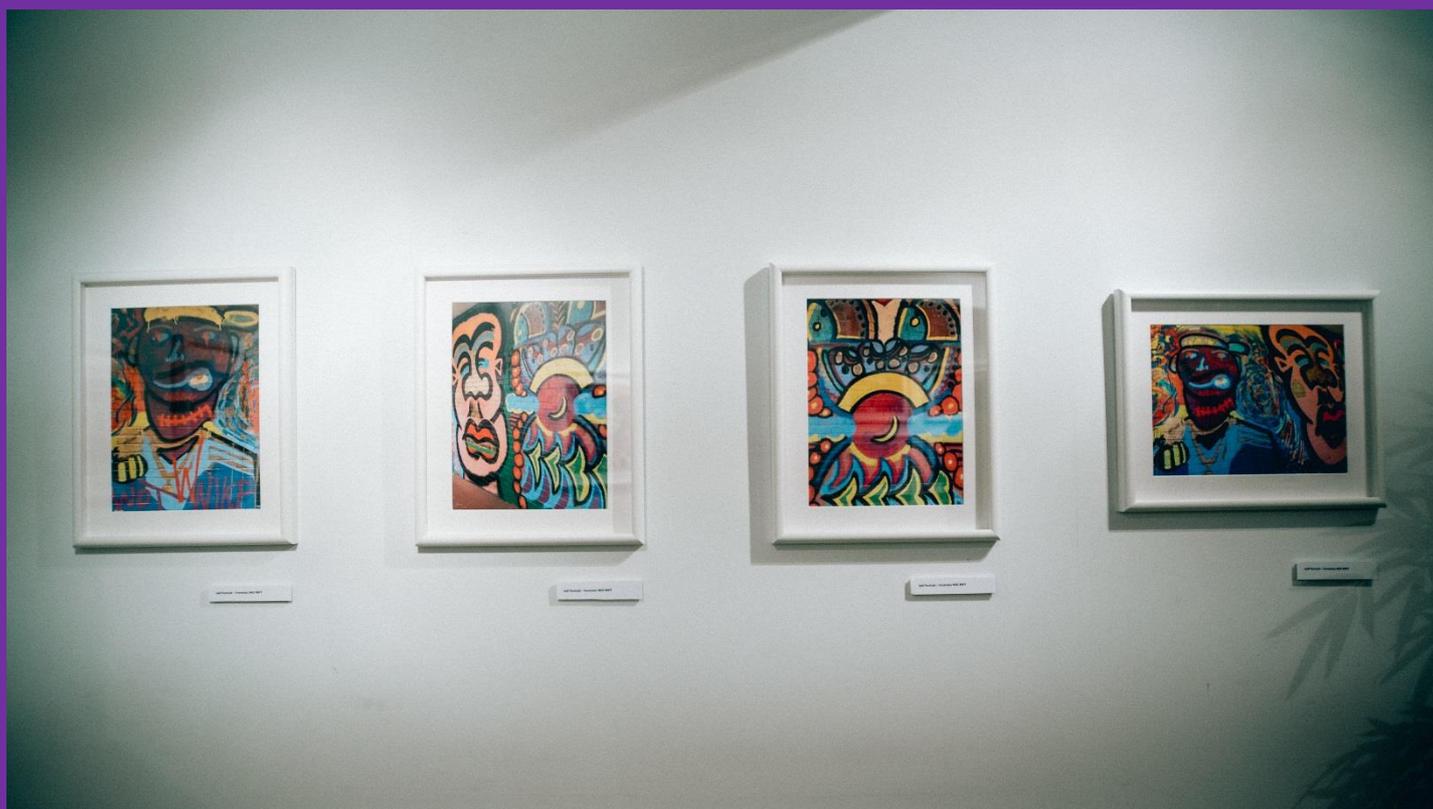
¹ Kagan, C., Burton, M., Duckett, P., Lawthom, R., & Siddiquee, A. (2011). *Critical community psychology*. Chichester: Wiley.

² Cleary, M., Siegfried, N., Escott, P., & Walter, G. (2016). Super Research or Super-Researched?: When Enough is Enough.... *Issues in mental health nursing*, 37(5), 380-382; Teo, T. (2010). What is epistemological violence in the empirical social sciences? *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4(5): 295-303.

³ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Table 2: Data collection

What collected?	How collected?
75 post-session responses from CREW participants	A series of closed- and open-ended statements for people to anonymously respond to following their 1:1 and group sessions each week, as offered on an I-Pad and recorded in Survey Monkey
11 1:1 interviews with CREW participants	An audio-recorded 10-20-minute semi-structured interview with individuals toward the end of their time in CREW, inviting people to reflect on their experiences with the programme
46 showcase voice-pops with service-providers and community members	Two-three-minute audio-recorded memos conducted during the three community showcases, asking people individually or in small groups to reflect on the evening through three simple questions: How did you hear about this? Why did you come? What do you think?
67 showcase postcards with service-providers and community members	Small postcards available for attendees at the three community showcases to write/draw reflections on the showcase in response to the following prompt: "Dear Outsider Gallery, Tonight made me think about..."



IVa. How are individuals affected by their experiences in CREW?

The post-session responses that participants were asked to do each week through Survey Monkey suggested that the CREW sessions positively affected people's sense of self, with over 90 percent of responses agreeing that the session provided enjoyment, confidence and improvement in mood, and that it would be both attended again and recommended to another person (see Table 3). The comments that went alongside these responses combined with the individual interviews undertaken with participants toward the end of their time in CREW, provided more detail regarding this impact of CREW on individuals. As such, three overarching themes will be discussed in the following sub-sections – an experience of *expression*, *imagination* and *collectivity*.

Table 3: Weekly check-ins after CREW sessions showing the percentage of responses that 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements given

Statement	% that agreed
I enjoyed the session	96%
Today's session improved my confidence	91%
Today's session improved my mood	95%
I learned new skills during today's session	81%
Today's session helped me move closer towards future training or employment	72%
Today's session allowed me to meet new people and make friends	77%
I would recommend today's session to a friend or family member	93%
I was able to discuss what is important to me during this session	84%
I will attend future sessions	97%

i. EXPERIENCING EXPRESSION

In terms of their experiences of expression, participants first spoke of their participation in CREW as invoking a sense of satisfaction. As well as responding with “really fun”, a “great time” and “enjoyable”, when asked in the post-session survey about what they enjoyed most that day, participants’ responses included “everything”, “I think just working on the songs it’s one step closer to success”, “practice – I was experimenting what I had learned”, “listening to last weeks session – very interesting” and “finishing album”. These experiences also came through the 1:1 interviews:

I’ve done a CD [...] Makes me feel good! (Aaron)

I never [knew] how to write music. Like I said the words have been there the whole time but to be able to sit down with a piano, just mess about with some chords and create something that sounds like a song, that made my confidence soar as far as that area in my life. [...] This is a very rewarding experience [...] [I got] a lot out of it [...] It’s been brilliant, the best thing that I’ve done in years. (Brett)

It just built confidence in so many people... Yeah, yeah definitely, including mine... So I just think it’s a great confidence builder. (Sara)

I have drawn a lot of things that I am really proud of. (Sam)

It’s enriching. I think it rewards their lives in ways that they may not have been rewarded yet. (Michelle)

It was enjoyable. It was really, really enjoyable and I put down what I wanted to put down [...] I was [nervous] at first because I didn’t think I really have a good voice to sing, but as soon as I tried singing on the mic then... I thought yeah, I’m not that bad at singing. [...] Yeah, it’s just ... it’s really, really enjoyable. (David)

At the beginning I felt out of place, didn’t really enjoy it but then again I had nothing to do so I gave it a try [...] After probably about a few weeks I realised that actually I’m doing a lot of productive things like drawing, making music... I have drawn a lot of things that I am really proud of... I felt more accomplished if anything, I felt that I was not exactly running towards a goal, but I was at least walking to one... And... it just helped me as a person really [...] I felt more confident with myself and I felt more confident with my creativity... yeah as I got to do more and more things, I felt more and more confident. (Valerie)

The above extracts suggest that the positive feelings people experienced from CREW – whether confidence, pride or enjoyment – directly arose from the creative process and came with both a sense of productivity and accomplishment, and, most importantly, an

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“I have drawn a lot of things that I am really proud of”
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(CREW Participant)

“It just helped me as a person really. I felt more confident with myself and I felt more confident with my creativity”
(CREW Participant)

opportunity to express themselves. When asked in the post-session survey about what they enjoyed most that day, participants' responses included "self-expression", "freedom to express myself" and "being able to express myself musically". These experiences also came through in the 1:1 interviews:

I've wrote some lyrics, I did some singing, it was pretty fun, I enjoyed it. [...] I think it's a good programme, it's built both of our confidence, we get to learn something from the art and music session by expressing yourself so I think it's really helpful. (Callum)

It's music and art really, I have a track called liberal arts and it definitely liberates me to actually do the art and the music and something creative and constructive [...] What I've enjoyed, I'm guessing that they enjoyed, a lot is just the freedom to actually musically express yourself especially with Jon as well he is really, really deep with the piano and yeah I just sometimes just jump in and just play with him. (David)

And like that's what it's all about. Like you don't have to be an artist to make art. It's just self-expression really. (Sara)

You sort of learn while [...] getting out of your comfort zone. Some might think they're making a fool of themselves but actually they're expressing themselves. And to have a centre where people can literally do what they want... (Clarissa)

Below people talk about the therapeutic benefits of these opportunities for expression, including within a context of mental health services that might otherwise limit such experiences:

I'm a creative person and I need to have outlets for my creative expression and that was something that I was able to do [...] it's been a very difficult a few years. So it [CREW] was a nice release from a lot of tension [...] I need to be expressing myself. I'm gonna go loopy soon if I don't get out of me all the stuff that's in me right now because I'm going through such a creative- I go through bouts where my creativity is really on a high and bouts [when] I get very, very depressed when I can't, when I have no outlet. [...] Because it [CREW] is something that means so much to me to be able to do it but then having to stop is very difficult and so it can be an anti-climax [...] I think there needs to be more time you know. (Michelle)

[CREW] sounded interesting, other people like me with creative minds who have been through some stress and are tryna harness the creativity as opposed to let the creativity take over them, I think it was quite useful, I think it was a clever idea [...] I enjoy it it's fun. It's like a good place where you don't take things too seriously or too un-seriously, you can have a future [in art or music] if you want one or you don't

"What I've enjoyed, I'm guessing that they enjoyed, a lot is just the freedom to actually musically express yourself"
(CREW Participant)

"Like you don't have to be an artist to make art. It's just self-expression really"
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"It was a nice release from a lot of tension"
(CREW Participant)

"Other people like me with creative minds who have been through some stress and are tryna harness the creativity as opposed to let the creativity take over them"
(CREW Participant)

have to have one in the specific area if you don't want one, and I think it's quite useful. (Callum)

Mental health services in general are pretty crap, you know they're under-funded, they can't operate to what they should be doing, they miss out on things like prevention in that you have breakdown, or do something crazy before you get help [...] The government and the NHS [are] 3 or 4 times more [likely] to keep you on the ward, but there should be preventions involved. Something like this [CREW] I think is good for prevention because it helps people emotionally to be quite well because you're looking forward to something every Friday and you're creating something and it's like, "Okay we're building on this". And as you go along you're building more and more and your confidence builds [...] You'll feel great at the end of it. (Brett)

I think it's [CREW] definitely better than, a lot better than, all I've had cause it's only so much you can do in counselling and it's just a bit like "Yeah but what am I actually doing?" and you're not actually doing anything. (Clarissa)

I didn't enjoy the fact that it [CREW] was 1 hour a week. I would much rather have it as a 2 hours a week or 3 or whatever but 1 hour it does a lot of therapy but it has to do more therapy basically [...] It gives you the chance to get out your house you know what I mean? [...] Yeah it's just the time flew past way too fast [...] I'm actually sad to see it go so I don't know what I'm gonna do next Friday or the Friday after that. (David)

As long as I turn up [to CREW], things will get better and they have so yeah... It's just so accessible and comfortable and it's just comforting really... It's just brilliant and the facilities that they have is good and they're great for the courses... So yeah it's just brilliant... [If] anyone is like, "I need to do something, feeling shit", come here and you'll feel way better. (Sara)

Because there's been times when I just thought you-know-what... like a drug medication overdose or something like that, it's like don't worry about that now. (Sam)

Me having something to do. I had nothing to do, I was just at home... I had absolutely nothing to do and basically CREW gave me a way to enjoy my time... And to be freer really... It doesn't matter, it's just enjoy your time while you are here, it doesn't matter, don't worry about small stuff, don't worry about this that and the other. Don't lose hope really. (Valerie)

As compared to their experiences with clinically-led services and/or with nothing, participants in CREW speak powerfully about the programme's capacity to positively intervene on, if not prevent, their

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(CREW Participant)

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(CREW Participant)

distress and madness. This capacity in part arose through the opportunity for people to express feelings that might otherwise be overwhelming, but also through the freeing and comforting atmosphere provided by CREW, as further entered in the following two sections respectively.

ii. EXPERIENCING IMAGINATION

The second overarching theme in how CREW affected individuals was their experience of imagination. Enabled to get 'outside' of their everyday, people could first reimagine themselves.

I've always wanted to write a song, always. I felt that I could do it, but on your own it's difficult but Jon knows about music it's his job, so having [him] there to help me along like, "This needs to be like this..." [...] The first few sessions I felt very self-conscious... but once you get into you forget, you just create and you're glad to be there... I got so absorbed in what I was doing while editing the music so that was enough for me to keep coming back. (Brett)

You don't necessarily have to do anything or bring anything to the table. They sort of... open your drawers and get all the pens and pencils out and paper and... it's all inside you. They just get it out [...] They'll get it out of you whether you like it or not, and then you're really proud of what you've done. (Sara)

I found that I was able to do more than I would have given myself credit for being able to do. (Michelle)

Even though I can't really draw but you know I gave it my all. I got a couple of pictures [...] One of the pictures that I did draw I'm gonna use it as the album cover of my actual music CD... [It] means the self, it means everything that I think, everything that I am. It means my future, my enemies... knowing yourself before knowing others, just knowledge of self really [...] I really liked it a lot because like now at the end of the 10 weeks I have an album basically and that's such an accomplishment... It's actually more of an insight to who you are than it is as an accomplishment to others... Just the lyrics that I've actually mustered up by myself, and I feel like yeah, it's solid. (David)

Further, in reimagining themselves people were also enabled to reimagine the existence and potential of their voice in the world. This implicitly came through in participants' responses to the post-session survey about what they enjoyed most that day, which included "the sound of my own voice", "we did some improvisation with the piano and sounded beautiful, we incorporated my vocals to that and was really good" and "singing some lyrics I had written and playing percussion" – all of which suggest a valuing of one's own voice. However, more explicitly, some participants ultimately made music

"I had absolutely nothing to do and basically CREW gave me a way to enjoy my time. And to be freer really. It doesn't matter, it's just enjoy your time while you are here, it doesn't matter, don't worry about small stuff, don't worry about this that and the other. Don't lose hope really"

(CREW Participant)

"The first few sessions I felt very self-conscious... but once you get into you forget, you just create and you're glad to be there. I got so absorbed in what I was doing while editing the music so that was enough for me to keep coming back"

(CREW Participant)

and art that expressed social and political messages, whether about distress and madness or broader issues of social (in)justice:

It's helped me to be more outgoing, it's helped me to talk [...] and make my voice heard [...] It's about how I use my creativity, it's how I use my creativity. (Valerie)

They give you your voice, allow your voice to be heard as opposed to other places where they don't [...] I'm currently [learning] how to make and produce music, and that will be good experience because I want to be a music producer, that's one of the things I wanna do is produce music and I think I'll be really good after learning how to do that from him, learning the basics. (Callum)

I told him [CREW facilitator] what I wanted to do and he was on board with that [...] I wanted it to be a political message [...] to be wary of your leaders, whether it's a fascist leader like a dictator or something [...] It gives you the chance to get out your house you know what I mean? [...] It was just a new opportunity to do something. (David)

I've gained a sense that what I'm doing doesn't matter that much, which is nice. (Aaron)

I wrote it about somebody that I actually knew that died over drug overdose. (Brett)

These extracts offer detail on the ways in which CREW cultivated imagination, as participants were able to develop projects that opened their sense of what they and the world could be. This sense of possibility also came through in the open-ended section of participants' post-session responses, which included "poetry has a very deep power, letting you see into your sub-conscious mind and real feelings. It's not just rhyming at the end of a sentence but ur feelings" and "I would like to keep going 'til I discover a little bit of magic".

In addition, participants spoke of and/or demonstrated finding their voice with regard to CREW itself. While 'No' was given as a response four times, when asked in their post-session survey if anything could have been improved about the session that day, participants responded with "I think we need to be more clear about what we want to rehearse and then practice and be definite", "could have been longer", "repeat the sessions", "could have had more practice but getting there", "longer sessions are better", "more sessions one or twice a week", "sessions to be longer", "clearly defined project", "more of the same we need the computer to work so we can incorporate our own music choices".

Overwhelmingly, these extracts suggest participants' desire for mental health services that are more of the same. As one participant volunteered in the 'Any other comments?' section of the post-session

"You don't necessarily have to do anything or bring anything to the table. They sort of... open your drawers and get all the pens and pencils out and paper and... it's all inside you. They just get it out"
(CREW Participant)

"I found that I was able to do more than I would have given myself credit for being able to do"
(CREW Participant)

"At the end of the 10 weeks I have an album basically and that's such an accomplishment... It's actually more of an insight to who you are than it is as an accomplishment to others... Just the lyrics that I've actually mustered up by myself, and I feel like 'Yeah, it's solid'"
(CREW Participant)

survey, “No, carry on plz” and “keep doing it :)”. However, given as feedback, the quantity and quality of participants’ ideas in particular suggests that within CREW they know that their opinions matter, indeed that they were an essential part of the collective, as discussed in the final sub-section below.

iii. EXPERIENCING COLLECTIVITY

The third overarching theme in how CREW affected individuals was their experience of collectivity. In the post-session survey, participants responses to what they enjoyed most about the day included, “the relaxing atmosphere”, “the large session”, “the people” and “hearing finished songs done by others previously ... Ollie’s - shows what can be done from a jam and in a private session ... Also just drumming to Jamal's song as it developed” – all of which suggest a sense of being part of something”, even when people were working by themselves. This experience also came through in the 1:1 interviews:

Well I think its run very, very well. There's been contact probably all stages so [...] I didn't feel like I was a separate entity, I still felt part of the group because you hear... what other people are doing, and they hear about what you're doing so it doesn't feel like you're isolated [...] Even the dynamics when you do see people coming into the studio after you, the first couple of weeks was like the first comes in the next after you [...] A few weeks later it's like, “How is it going, what's happening?”, everybody can get on really well. [...] I mean I've had trouble [in the past with] being in groups [...], from that to now group-work, it's been really good. Everybody is creative so everybody is here for the same reason, you're not in a group of all different people, everybody's here because they've created something on the project and you know it's great. Everybody's happy about what they've done I think. (Brett)

Well yeah it's just having a good relationship with everyone here and you know if it was Nick, if it was Nana, if it was [...] Jon and Ben, and [...] while I'm doing my sessions in the morning, I would normally have someone else in here as well he is one the persons that comes to the music sessions as well. He would actually come to my session, sit down and just won't say and word and just listen to me make the tracks [...] [whereas with another participant] I just sometimes just jump in and just play with him [...] And yeah there's a couple of people here that I really like and I have a lot of banter with them as well. (David)

I think that towards the end of the course that I recently did, everyone was just like so with it with each other... They were just like mates and then they even tried to be friends. [...] [It] just felt like a gang of people having fun... and I think that's like the goal of any sort of education really... Yeah everyone

“We did some improvisation with the piano and sounded beautiful, we incorporated my vocals to that and was really good”
(CREW Participant)

“It's helped me to be more outgoing, it's helped me to talk and make my voice heard”
(CREW Participant)

“They give you your voice, allow your voice to be heard as opposed to other places where they don't”
(CREW Participant)

“I wanted it to be a political message [...] to be wary of your leaders, whether it's a fascist leader like a dictator or something”
(CREW Participant)

“I wrote it about somebody that I actually knew that died over drug overdose”
(CREW Participant)

was included, like actually everyone... Everyone pushed each other. [...] I just thought it was just so beneficial to have that. It's like a youth club for adults... but you actually learn stuff. (Sara)

Overtime like relationships build in the group activities so people will start to get to know each other and then people start to gel. [...] Towards the end it just felt like a gang of people having fun. (Clarissa)

This provides something more than just the courses. I think it is somewhere that people can be and who might otherwise be alone. (Michelle)

Here, participants speak of the positive effects of the friendships and comradery developed during CREW and thus a sense of being a part of something bigger than themselves. Of note here is the opportunity for this participation to take diverse forms and how the effectiveness of the group came from working toward a shared project, suggesting that CREW cultivated an individual's sense of value within the collective. Participants felt that this was particularly significant given their experiences of distress and madness:

When someone's going through stuff, we obviously try to support each other. [...] Everyone has to talk to each other so we get together for that as well because at the end of the end it's what we achieved. (Valerie)

[I have done] art classes and stuff like that but they're not specialised for people who are suffering with mental health issues [...] So you sort of feel like it's just more comfortable when you're around people if you're going through something. They don't say it but you know they're all there for the same reason. (Clarissa)

It's nice to be surrounded by people that are understanding because they may not have exactly the same problems in their lives or the same unwellness [...] [but] if somebody's having a bad day, people are quite accepting of that and these people are nurtured, and not just "Oh he's being a pain again" or something. (Michelle)

Perhaps not unrelated, nearly all participants were initially hesitant about joining CREW. Brett spoke of how he was "resistant" to come along at first because he's had "horrendous" experiences at the centre before, but soon realised that it was now "brilliant". When asked to explain this shift he replied:

Everyone smoking and staring up into space talking about their symptoms and side effects, that's when I stopped

"Poetry has a very deep power, letting you see into your sub-conscious mind and real feelings"
(CREW Participant)

"Even the dynamics when you do see people coming into the studio after you, the first couple of weeks was like the first comes in the next after you. A few weeks later it's like, 'How is it going, what's happening?'"
(CREW Participant)

"Everyone was included, like actually everyone. Everyone pushed each other. I just thought it was just so beneficial to have that. It's like a youth club for adults but you actually learn stuff"
(CREW Participant)

coming here a few years ago [...] it just wasn't a very supportive atmosphere, there wasn't a lot going on. (Brett)

Firstly I thought I wasn't gonna enjoy it but the first week came around and I got to use all of the music studio equipment and I felt a good vibe and I thought what I should carry on coming here [...] At first it was like a jittery butterflies in the stomach but I saw that the man [CREW facilitator] was quite genuine and I thought you know what let's just do something productive here. (David)

As is clear in the latter extract, the role of the CREW facilitators was central to people getting through their initial nerves. Indeed, throughout all of the qualitative data specific reference was made to their skills in making the space for expression, imagination and collectivity – Ben and Jon were appreciated in terms of being “enthusiastic”, “inspirational”, “solid”, “very keen” and “very good”.

Nonetheless participants spoke candidly about themselves as agents too. Callum described how – as opposed to himself who would “keep forgetting that I have it” and found it “just wasn't on my priorities” – other people were able to find the programme more “useful”:

They bonded just better, they were more organised, when arriving and thinking about what they were gonna do during the lesson. [So] I don't know if it's up to the organisation to improve it or for the people that come to improve it 'cos I think the organisation has [to] come from both parts. (Callum)

I shut myself away for like 2 or 3 weeks and sometimes you have to do that. But when you're involved in a project like this, I think you've got to give it your all. You can't just say, “I'm only going to be going in half of the time”, and then at the end of it say, “Oh I didn't achieve much”. You've got to commit to it yourself and there's been a couple of mornings I haven't felt like coming, and I'll give myself a kick up the ass and say, “You've gotta do it, you know, people are there to help you” [...] If you've got the confidence, will power to do the 10 weeks, then do it, get involved, you'll feel great at the end of it. (Brett)

At least come to the first 2 weeks to see what it's all about if you don't like it after that then it's not for you. Just give it a try though. It's the same as eating something... give it a try, if you don't like it then you don't like it, just give it a try. (David)

These extracts suggest that CREW was able to cultivate an experience of collectivity in which participants could build valuable relationships with each other and the CREW facilitators as well as recognise the necessities of their own contributions to the group. This potential to make distress and madness something that is shared is all the more potent given that the tradition within clinically-led services is to individualise problems and solutions.

“It's nice to be surrounded by people that are understanding because they may not have exactly the same problems in their lives or the same unwellness, but if somebody's having a bad day, people are quite accepting of that and these people are nurtured”
(CREW Participant)

“You've got to commit to it yourself and there's been a couple of mornings I haven't felt like coming, and I'll give myself a kick up the ass and say, ‘You've gotta do it, you know, people are there to help you’”
(CREW Participant)

IVc. How are services and the community affected by the work of CREW?

Approximately 250 people attended the three CREW showcases – service-users, service providers, mental health workers, funders, friends, family and strangers. From the 100 or so people who shared their experience across 46 voice-pops on the evening, people came after hearing about the event through colleagues, friends, family, their workplace, social media, mental health services and CREW participants and facilitators. All brought others with them, and the majority came in the name of curiosity, inspiration and support – whether of specific people or the overall ethos of the event. Aside from the resounding positivity for CREW, what was particularly striking about the 46 voice-pops and 67 postcards collected during these events, was the high degree of thoughtfulness conveyed in people's responses. This engagement can be organised into three themes – **community**, **creativity** and **healing** – as discussed in the following sub-sections.

i. EXPERIENCING AND APPRECIATING COMMUNITY

First, service-providers and community members gained an experience and appreciation of community through their participation in a CREW showcase. On an immediate level, this came through expressions of enjoyment:

I think it's fantastic (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

It's absolutely brilliant (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

Amazing I love it so much! (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

The whole thing is so brilliant! (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

It's brilliant... Yeah just enjoying it. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

...Great night, music is fun (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...This is and was an amazing night. Excellent. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

A great evening – I didn't expect there to be so many people – a good party atmosphere (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

...It made me wake up and it was fun. It was exciting!! (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...Having more fun x. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

It was really good, I think the whole project was a really good idea actually... Beneficial for a lot of people... everyone, anyone and everyone... It's good, it was good, good fun, good fun. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

“I think it's
fantastic”
(Community Member)

“Amazing I love it
so much!”
(Community Member)

“The whole thing is
so brilliant!”
(Community Member)

“It made me wake up
and it was fun. It
was exciting!!”
(Community Member)

“Experiencing great
art and
performances,
meeting nice people
and making new
friends and having
a thoroughly good
time”
(Community Member)

...Experiencing great art and performances, meeting nice people and making new friends and having a thoroughly good time. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

I even drove [for two hours] to come here... It was awesome, the live music was really moving. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

...Swirling in my hood. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

It makes me want to become more involved with these kind of events (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

These extracts suggest that people's enjoyment of the showcases emerged out of a sense of community created by the events. This sense was in part through an atmosphere in which people felt both supported and supporting:

It's a very relaxed atmosphere, great to see the slideshows and the cinema again, really enjoyed the different art work. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

Oh it's much better than expected [...] The music, the entertainment, the atmosphere, that kind of thing. It's really good, really laid back you can actually just walk in, be cool. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

I think it's really nice... friendly atmosphere... which is cool. And then it's relaxed [...] Because it was very intimate you know. It's a small event... very close, the artist, there's no barriers or anything. It was very direct. They were singing very intimate and private songs I think. [...] It was true. You could feel that they really want to do something and... nothing was fake about it. [...] I was just mesmerised, together with all this art [which] fits perfectly with the songs. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

...Community, arts, health, recovery. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

Really amazing project, really beautiful work inside, really moving pieces and the crowd is really wonderful at the concert... Like in the musical performance right now I feel like a really powerful sense of community and support, and a sort of a sense that everyone's here to encourage one another and what they're presenting. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

It's prosperous. I think it's very fruitful for young people to have a space where they can just build on their confidence skills, performance skills, interact with other people, safe environment. I think it's really positive. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

“It makes me want to become more involved with these kind of events”
(Community Member)

“It's really nice friendly atmosphere”
(Community Member)

“It was true. You could feel that they really want to do something and nothing was fake about it. I was just mesmerised”
(Community Member)

“I feel like a really powerful sense of community and support”
(Community Member)

“How good it is to be a person and how a genuinely functioning community exists”
(Community Member)

...The amazing work you are all doing to help everyone needs it. Art + music + friends + love. Well done guys. M x. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...Kindness and the power of friendship x. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How lucky I am to be in the company of such lovely people. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How wonderful this crew is. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How good it is to be a person and how a genuinely functioning community exists. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...Life! How hard it is until you meet the right people to help see you through. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

Positive, very positive, positive vibes. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

I think it's awesome, like it made me feel really good and some of the stuff that's been produced, they're really nice. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

I think seeing young people who clearly love music and feel afraid or anxious to get up and share their talent, if people actually get up and just do it, if people who are afraid and they get up and do it and get a great reaction, and seeing them feel really good about themselves... that's really cool, yeah. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

...The contribution of young people to our society. Made me aware of the importance of recognising and accepting any mental health. Lovely evening - everyone friendly and at ease. (Showcase 2; Postcard)

...Many thanks... A lovely space + eve, but something much greater. I'm inspired to learn more and see how I can apply, adopt apart crew... and work together. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How important it is to publicly celebrate recovery. How important it is to have lots of people alongside you, do it with you. Therapy beyond the silent witness. Therapists with and for you. There is a wonderful atmosphere of support and of triumph. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How great we could be as a society, if we all embraced events such as "The Outsiders". Thank you for sharing your work. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

"Life! How hard it is until you meet the right people to help see you through"

(Community Member)

"The contribution of young people to our society. Made me aware of the importance of recognising and accepting any mental health"

(Community Member)

"A lovely space + eve, but something much greater. I'm inspired to learn more and see how I can apply, adopt apart crew and work together"

(Community Member)

"How important it is to publicly celebrate recovery. How important it is to have lots of people alongside you, do it with you. Therapy beyond the silent witness. Therapists with and for you"

(Community Member)

Incredible I think... particularly the piece on the way in, it talked about [...] encouraging outsiders to feel like an insider, and this is their project and we're coming to have a look at what they can do, and how they would express themselves. It's... enlightening to see what they want to write or what they sing about and things like that. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

The CREW showcases were able to make a comfortable and positive space where people could reflect on not only what support looks and feels like but how to contribute to this in society. The last extract in particular names how this allowed CREW to walk the talk in terms of its commitments to "outsiders", as also came through people's expressions of how the showcase made them think about the value of difference and diversity:

...Freedom that we can do anything that we want to! Brilliant. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...How lucky I am to live in a world of diversity and beauty. You are all wonderful souls! (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...The beauty of being an "outsider". (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...The celebration of life. The dark side and the light.... People in general are so complex but this exhibit shines wonderful light on the complexity of the human. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...Tonight made me think inside the wonderful minds of others. The mind is full of many wonders which is proven by today's art work. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...Beautiful minds and lots of love. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...How we are not results we are not success rates we are not targets for engagement. We are not artists. We are not sick. We are human. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How we are full of wonderful energy / talent / potential. Amazing!! (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...Music and the people are AMAZING. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...My feelings, my relationships w/animals + other humans, things that happen inside singing + songs. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...The beauty of real lives. This was a real live performance. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...That people need to be more aware of MH [mental health] and how they can help to support the young people and not be ashamed. (Showcase 2; Postcard)

"How great we could be as a society, if we all embraced events such as 'The Outsiders'"
(Community Member)

"How lucky I am to live in a world of diversity and beauty. You are all wonderful souls!"
(Community Member)

"The celebration of life. The dark side and the light. People in general are so complex but this exhibit shines wonderful light on the complexity of the human"
(Community Member)

"Tonight made me think inside the wonderful minds of others"
(Community Member)

"How we are full of wonderful energy / talent / potential. Amazing!!"
(Community Member)

...One love, one love, individuals, life, peace, diversity, hope, joy, variety. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...The unity and human of creativity. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...Life!! (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...All the talent within the mental health community and all the good that goes alongside the bad! Amazing! (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How wonderful was this idea to bring people with mental health problem to do something that make us see them as normal people with feelings they show us that they have something else to offer than what we see. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

I enjoy the live music, I like the artwork... I think it evokes a greater passion for human beings being here, watching people who can be quite vulnerable perform, and you empathise with them so that's one of the reasons why I enjoy it. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

...Other people. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

Very inspiring – lots of them have something very interesting and something deep and it's nice (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

I didn't know what to expect and I'm really, inspired with what I experienced. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

...The power of bringing people 'inside', the magic of love and attention I LOVE the "normalness" of this work as an intervention – human correction. Opportunity, music, fellowship – thank you! (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How important normative space is. So great to have a real exhibition + performance that brings people together and isn't patronising. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

These extracts suggest people were not only inspired and enlivened by their time at the showcase, but also encouraged to respect the complexity and possibility of humanity. Along with the many other extracts that express how the showcase challenged their expectations, this final extract suggests that such expectations may have been affected by a tendency for events that celebrate art and music produced through distress and madness to be patronising. Instead, by making a space for people to feel a sense of enjoyment, support and diversity, the CREW showcases created an overall vibe that enabled a genuine experience and appreciation of not only community, but creativity – as discussed in the following sub-section.

“The beauty of real lives. This was a real live performance”
(Community Member)

“Very inspiring – lots of them have something very interesting and something deep and it's nice”
(Community Member)

“The power of bringing people 'inside', the magic of love and attention I LOVE the 'normalness' of this work as an intervention”
(Community Member)

“How important normative space is. So great to have a real exhibition + performance that brings people together and isn't patronising”
(Community Member)

“A lot of what we've seen some if it is the quality of what you'd see in a gallery”
(Community Member)

ii. EXPERIENCING AND APPRECIATING CREATIVITY

Second, service-providers and community members gained an experience and appreciation of creativity through their participation in a CREW showcase. When asked to comment on the evening, people consistently made immediate references to the high quality of the art and music on show:

Lovely night, lovely song and poem (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

Really, really good I'm very impressed – keep going, amazing (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

A lot of what we've seen some if it is the quality of what you'd see in a gallery anyway (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

The performances we saw tonight were... awesome (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

The live thing was absolutely stunning. Really, I was very impressed. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

Beautiful – I did like the singing (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

I quite like the art... the art and of course the music but the arts are really really expressive [...] it's very individual, it shows the personality of the artist. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

Well we only just arrive but so far I think it is extremely interesting, I'm hoping to see more of the music. I thought the rapping was very, very good but that's all I've heard so far. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

I think it's nice. I think it's all very well put together. I like the art and the whole setup, it's nice. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

It's really great and the artwork is amazing, it really is. And the songs are great as well. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

My bigger vision of this is to see people with talents being networked in the [...] music industry, or the art industry so that they can get self-sufficient and independent with their talent. So it's not just a side-line like a hobby but they can also generate an income and be on a level playing field with all the other artists. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

I'm already interested in outsider art and I know its called Outsider Art Gallery – I wanted to come and see what is going on here in North London. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

“The live thing was absolutely stunning. Really, I was very impressed”

(Community Member)

“The artwork is amazing”

(Community Member)

“It was incredible how much talent was on show that would have otherwise gone unnoticed”

(Community Member)

“The importance of music in our lives, how brilliant and effective the video installations can be, what brilliant people came together tonight!!!”

(Community Member)

“I just find it really astounding to keep being amazed by the music, by the poetry, by the art and also the fact that I'd stay here for 3 hours and talk to people about mental health, about art”

(Community Member)

...Being a better drawer/artist instead of drawing pictures of stickmen! Lol <3 (Showcase 2; Postcard)

...How amazing the music and the arts are....great work. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...How great all the performances were and all the great art work in the building. It was great to see Outsider Gallery and I would recommend to my friends. (Showcase 2; Postcard)

...How important it is to give people an outlet and focus. It was incredible how much talent was on show that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Amazing work. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...Doing art and appreciating it as well. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

I just find it really astounding to keep coming back, keep being amazed by the music, by the poetry, by the art and also the fact that I'd stay here for 3 hours and talk to people about mental health, about art. [...] In London you'd have a drink and you'd leave, some people just walk out with pictures, a lot of people just walk out having not really shared anything of any real value with anyone. Whereas tonight, people talk about their experiences in mental health system, they talk about their experience on the course, very open about how they've made their work. It's really an amazing event. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

As this last extract shows, by foregrounding people's art and music, the CREW showcase also created a space for people to engage with the artists and musicians as artists and musicians – not 'patients' or 'service-users'. For many people, this led to broader reflections on the power and importance of art and music in the lives of both themselves and others:

...The importance of music in our lives, how brilliant and effective the video installations can be, what brilliant people came together tonight!!! (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...The wonders of art, music and community in an uncertain and frightening world. Long may this work thrive. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...How important &vital creativity + self expression is for wellbeing – for individuals and communities and the whole world! Absolutely loved this evening. Thank you! +made me wants to sing and make creativity more of a daily part of my life. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

I think art plays a vital role in uplifting people's spirits and that kind of thing. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

“The wonders of art, music and community in an uncertain and frightening world. Long may this work thrive”
(Community Member)

“How important &vital creativity + self expression is for wellbeing – for individuals and communities and the whole world! Absolutely loved this evening. Thank you!”
(Community Member)

“Looking at the artwork, for me it feels like this really amazing open space, sort of liberatory space”
(Community Member)

“How powerful it is to create our way out of mental distress”
(Community Member)

Looking at the artwork, for me it feels like this really amazing open space, sort of liberatory space, in terms of just putting on the page whatever comes to you and in ways that can feel arbitrary but also like very specific. There's some kind of freedom that a blank page offers to you that can be both really scary and really amazing... That's the bit I like, I think that's where I see the expression happening [...] and the movement. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

...How powerful it is to create our way out of mental [...] distress. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

The CREW showcases offered service-providers and community members an experience and appreciation of creativity that not only interrupted a stigmatising gaze toward distress and madness but turned people to creative modes of healing, as discussed in more detail in the following sub-section.

iii. EXPERIENCING AND APPRECIATING HEALING

Third, service-providers and community members gained an experience and appreciation of healing through their participation in a CREW showcase. This came through in people's connections with and reflections on the art and music they encountered:

Very emotional, very emotive. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

Very emotional (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

It's really close to my heart (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

Got me straight in the heart. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

It's great, yeah, its very good... I like the aeroplane, I like the aeroplane... and the dog and the performance by the girls... heart moving. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

It was very touching. It was like you could see the emotions. It was so transparent and I appreciated it so much. It was beautiful... The girl singing, the second girl singing, it was "oh my god", like tears in my eyes. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

I was nearly in tears about three times and I was like oh my God it was the unexpectedness... Because it's such a small venue and you are so close, there's no barrier, nothing, it's very direct... So it's really touching and they were singing like pretty emotional songs and very touching lyrics I think... I know that this sounds cheesy or something but it was quite open and brave I'd say. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

“Very emotional,
very emotive”
(Community Member)

“It's really close
to my heart”
(Community Member)

“Got me straight in
the heart”
(Community Member)

“It was very
touching. It was
like you could see
the emotions. It
was so transparent
and I appreciated
it so much. It was
beautiful”
(Community Member)

“I've been really
pleasantly
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more”
(Community Member)

I didn't really know what it was about until I got here, so I've been really pleasantly surprised because I actually felt quite moved from all the live music I was hearing, had a little tear in my eye so it's... educated me a bit more. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

It's very therapeutic (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

It's been very emotional. It's definitely from a place that you don't normally see... I think everyone takes something different away from it but for me personally music and art are a massive part of my life so I can relate to that. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

...Thank you for this, made me reflect, feel very emotional and drained me of a lot of stuffs I need to get rid of, it was amazing! (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...Using music to heal myself. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

...Healing (Showcase 1; Postcard)

Really impressed by the poems – they're lovely... a bit sad some of them, but very deep and profound. A very unique experience. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

...Feelings of quiet reflexion. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

Taking in the art pieces – it's quite unusual – a lot of pain... something for me I don't confront very often so it's very interesting for me to kind of look at these images. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

...My own journey as a young person and appreciating the strength it took for all the young people to be a part of and put this together. Well done! (Showcase 2; Postcard)

To be honest I didn't know what to expect when coming here tonight. And I think, just walking around, especially the first room [with] art done by younger people. When you look at it, you really think back to it and go actually, "What was you like when you were that age and actually did you have some of these thoughts, did you not?" And actually, it makes you realise that mental health is one of those things that isn't talked about a lot, but actually it's out there, it's everywhere, and lot's of people you might know have gone through it [...] that you didn't realise at the time [...] Some [people] may actually go, "I can understand where they might be coming from" or "Wow, I can't believe that's happened, it's unreal". (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

"It's been very emotional. It's definitely from a place that you don't normally see"
(Community Member)

"Thank you for this, made me reflect, feel very emotional and drained me of a lot of stuffs I need to get rid of, it was amazing!"
(Community Member)

"Healing"
(Community Member)

"Feelings of quiet reflexion"
(Community Member)

"My own journey as a young person and appreciating the strength it took for all the young people to be a part of and put this together"
(Community Member)

...The courage to say things that are not often spoken. (Showcase 2; Postcard)

I thought it was brilliant... the performances were – adjectives fail me in a way – extraordinary really and very very moving and touching. I guess a lot of people will say that but that was what I thought... I suppose I was particularly perhaps affected by elements of performance because she was clearly very nervous and she was also very brave and spoke from the heart about things that we don't often have the courage to speak about (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

...Bravery. How damn scared so many of us are to show vulnerability or anything raw and real; [...] that some speak in other languages than your own – some use words but that isn't the only form of communication. (Showcase 2; Postcard)

It's wonderful, wonderful. I think it kind of puts you into perspective. Would you do it if that was you? And if it was me I wouldn't do it, I have stage fright... It's really brave to stand up there and perform. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

I recognize in myself mental health difficulties and in everyone that I communicate with, and it is encouraging to see it addressed because you feel like people are going to be more comfortable addressing it within themselves (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

...That we all suffer, some more visible than others, I really enjoy these nights and will be back. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

We all suffer from mental health problems, some more strenuously than others, and this is therapy which everyone – whether they're under section, or under monitoring services, or they're just trying out something – they can achieve and can express something with - so I think it's very inclusive. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

...How wonderful the art is, some (most) people are, how similar all of us are, own problems but the healing / recovery process is the same: find your way to express. (Showcase 1; Postcard)

It's not a shame to have- it's all relative isn't it, what I think is mental illness compared to someone else? Even with my own children sometimes they do go and up and down and you don't know how to reach them. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

There's this idea that if you exhibit works by people who have mental health problems then you're pushing this Victorian basket-weaving agenda of "look at them", but I think it's actually much more interesting what's happening here because what we're seeing is people going, "Well actually look at me". It's very much work that is like a mirror

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(Community Member)

and I think a lot of people go like, “Actually I feel like this” or, “These are the sort of things that I would make, or I would want to make”. And I find people’s interaction with the work [here] isn’t “This is the work of an Other” but its highly relatable. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

These extracts suggest that the CREW showcase made a space for people to not just witness but feel things that might usually be unspoken in or silenced by society. In turn, they expressed a recurring respect for the artists and musicians. Moreover, and as summarised in the final extract, while some people spoke with a ‘they’ the majority reflected on their own experiences, suggesting that the works enabled people to reflect on their own relationship to distress and madness. This not only invited their own experience and appreciation of healing, but enabled those attending to connect with, rather than ‘other’, people with diagnosed mental health problems.

Many people also commented on the value of and need for CREW to continue as an alternative to clinically-led services:

I am really proud of the clients that I referred because it’s really changed them. One is singing [and] he is ever so good. I mean obviously it took a lot out of him but he’s got there, he can’t do a performance but he can do a video. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

I think that mental health is really important now and it’s, this is a good platform. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

I confront this sort of stuff very often through my job and its always very touching to hear the stories of people with mental health problems conveyed in whatever medium – whether its art or music –sometimes it’s a lot easier for people to tell their story when it’s in a creative way like that. I think it’s really good for helping people to express themselves. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

It’s a life-saver – I don’t think there’s much other stuff that he can do right now so that fact that he does this once a week. As far as I’m concerned he could be doing it every day, that would be great... I’m really grateful for it. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

I think it’s wonderful. I think the whole concept of actually working with people in mental health, naturally getting them to express themselves through art is just... fantastic, and actually then being able to show that to other people, I think it’s great. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

Absolutely fantastic. It’s fascinating really, the paintings are just really breath-taking... It’s really good to see some innovative projects in mental health growing in Haringay and I’m just hoping that this sort of approach to mental ill health

“It’s very much work that is like a mirror and I think a lot of people go like, ‘Actually I feel like this’ or, ‘These are the sort of things that I would make, or I would want to make’. And I find people’s interaction with the work isn’t ‘This is the work of an Other’ but its highly relatable”
(Community Member)

“I am really proud of the clients that I referred because it’s really changed them”
(Service-provider)

“It’s a life-saver”
(Service-provider)

can be mainstreamed... I think we need to think about how to grow this project and how to make it more sustainable and give it a proper life... I would like to see maybe an exhibit in a proper gallery. (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

So many young people nowadays with mental illness... this can actually help, if we had this in schools ... it could be a model ... because while you're doing something you're able to talk (Showcase 1; Voice-pop)

...The music therapy... is literally keeping people out of hospital. I was close to complete breakdown when Jon helped me express myself. He has a wonderful gift of showing people on the outside [that] what they have inside is a beautiful thing. I just pray it can continue. Thank you. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

I hope that there will be more opportunities for more young people to have the chance to see what they can do... And I guess for me that means having very flexible arrangements and opportunities for people to try things out in a really low pressure way and ideally future funding... It would really be great if there were opportunities for people who are maybe completely stuck at home or really isolated to have... the opportunity maybe to meet people in different contexts and then to come and try something... If they could take that first leap would get huge amount from it but that first leap is really really difficult. (Showcase 2; Voice-pop)

We change lives, it's a pity that we don't have the resources to go forward with this project that you know it's something that we can build on, that this is where it ends because there is no more money to fund it. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

...Invest in programmes like CREW. They... keep people out of hospital. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

...How important this is. (Showcase 3; Postcard)

I work in a legal world where we also work with mental health issues and I've also worked in a gallery world as well. So, this comes together completely with both my interest which is very much being able to exhibit work while at the same time being for something other than just money... Most of the works on display tonight aren't for sale. Because this isn't about raising money, it's about saving money. [...] It's unlike any other sort of art that you'd go to in London, because no one's got an agenda, it's not about concept, this is just really visceral, really human and really unapologetic. As a result of these people engaging in treatment, they're [NHS] saving... money because, by engaging in this treatment, they're staying out of hospitals, they're receiving a treatment through the therapy. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

“I'm just hoping that this sort of approach to mental ill health can be mainstreamed”
(Service-provider)

“Invest in programmes like CREW. They... keep people out of hospital”
(Service-provider)

“I hope that there will be more opportunities for more young people to have the chance to see what they can do”
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“It's unlike any other sort of art that you'd go to in London [...] this is just really visceral, really human and really unapologetic. As a result of these people engaging in treatment, they're [NHS] saving money because [...] they're staying out of hospitals”
(Service-provider)

In the NHS we're not looking at things on a bottom line basis – this [CREW] is not a corporation, it's not a private entity, and spending on therapy such as this... which has very visible results, you have an instant attraction to the general public, it raises awareness about mental health, it raises awareness of NHS funding, and it should be encouraged and this shouldn't be the final CREW show... It's incredible. So long live CREW, definitely. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

Today is a brilliant day because the [amount of] people that came... is amazing. We had so much people to come to witness what we're doing here and the good jobs the managers are doing as well with the NHS, and I think it's a brilliant opportunity and I believe that we need to get together to support this project and keep it going because people are benefitting from it as well, which is different from the other way other mental health service-users have been rehabilitated into this society. I believe this is a much more efficient and proactive way to get service-users to express their talent and their initiatives. (Showcase 3; Voice-pop)

These extracts express a resounding support for the continuation of CREW as a programme that offers to not only improve but save lives, while at the same time both promote and relieve the other NHS providers. The CREW showcase made a space for service-providers and community members to experience and appreciate an unique and effective form of healing with regard to both themselves and others without the paternalism and pathologisation that can otherwise accompany programmes related to mental health.

“Spending on therapy such as this, which has very visible results, you have an instant attraction to the general public, it raises awareness about mental health, it raises awareness of NHS funding, and it should be encouraged and this shouldn't be the final CREW show. It's incredible. So long live CREW, definitely”
(Service-provider)

IVc. What makes CREW distinct from clinically-led services?

Together, the above findings suggest that CREW participants,

1. experience confidence, pride and enjoyment, including a sense of accomplishment
2. feel free to, and comfortable with, expressing themselves
3. are able to see their own and each other's capacity and potential
4. come to know that their voice matters
5. make friends, support each other, work together and feel part of a collective, and
6. happily become actively involved in the process.

In addition, the findings suggest that through their encounter with CREW service providers and community members,

7. have their expectations challenged
8. commit to community
9. value diversity
10. see people as more than their diagnoses
11. respect people who experience distress and madness
12. witness and feel unspoken or silenced experiences, and
13. do not 'other' people who experience distress and madness.

These lists suggest that CREW offers participants an experience distinct from clinically-led services. CREW creates an alternative space where participants' insight is invited not in terms of accepting a medical account of their experiences, but in terms of exploring and exploding who they and others are and could be. Moreover, CREW creates a collective space that invites people to dialogue across differences, enabling a broader analysis of their experiences as connected to particular contexts, seeing that things do not have to be 'this way', imagining that another world is possible and collectively moving towards this. Allowing these experiences of expression, imagination and collectivity, CREW is therefore promising a unique and effective form of empowerment in line with 'psychologies of liberation'⁴ – contributing to both individual and social wellbeing⁵.

Further, by making a space for service-providers and community members to reflect on and connect with experiences of distress and madness, CREW offers an alternative to mainstream mental health campaigns. Given that feeling, discomfort *and* safety are a necessary pathway for sustained personal and social change⁶, the capacity of the showcases to gently nudge and stretch emotional boundaries in a supportive setting suggests that CREW is striking a complex and powerful balance for impacting how people relate to distress and madness. While there is a growing body of evidence that anti-discrimination campaigns centring a medical model increase stigma and social exclusion⁷, CREW enables a form of public engagement that *decentres* pathology and *recentres* community, creativity and healing. Simultaneously respecting the strength, contribution and humanity of people's experiences, this potential to challenge discrimination also alleviates the suffering associated with distress and madness⁸. In addition, by explicitly valuing an 'outsider' status – both for participants and for the programme itself – CREW welcomes the contributions of diversity and marginality⁹, reframing efforts for 'inclusion' toward not simply transforming individuals but transforming society.

In sum, by making a space for participants to experience expression, imagination and collectivity, and for service-providers and community members to experience and appreciate community, creativity and healing, CREW is an empowering, de-stigmatising and transformative programme with the potential to make a remarkable therapeutic and social impact that is highly distinct from other clinical services.

⁴ Martin Baro, I. (1994). *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Watkins, M. & Shulman, H. (2008). *Toward Psychologies of Liberation*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

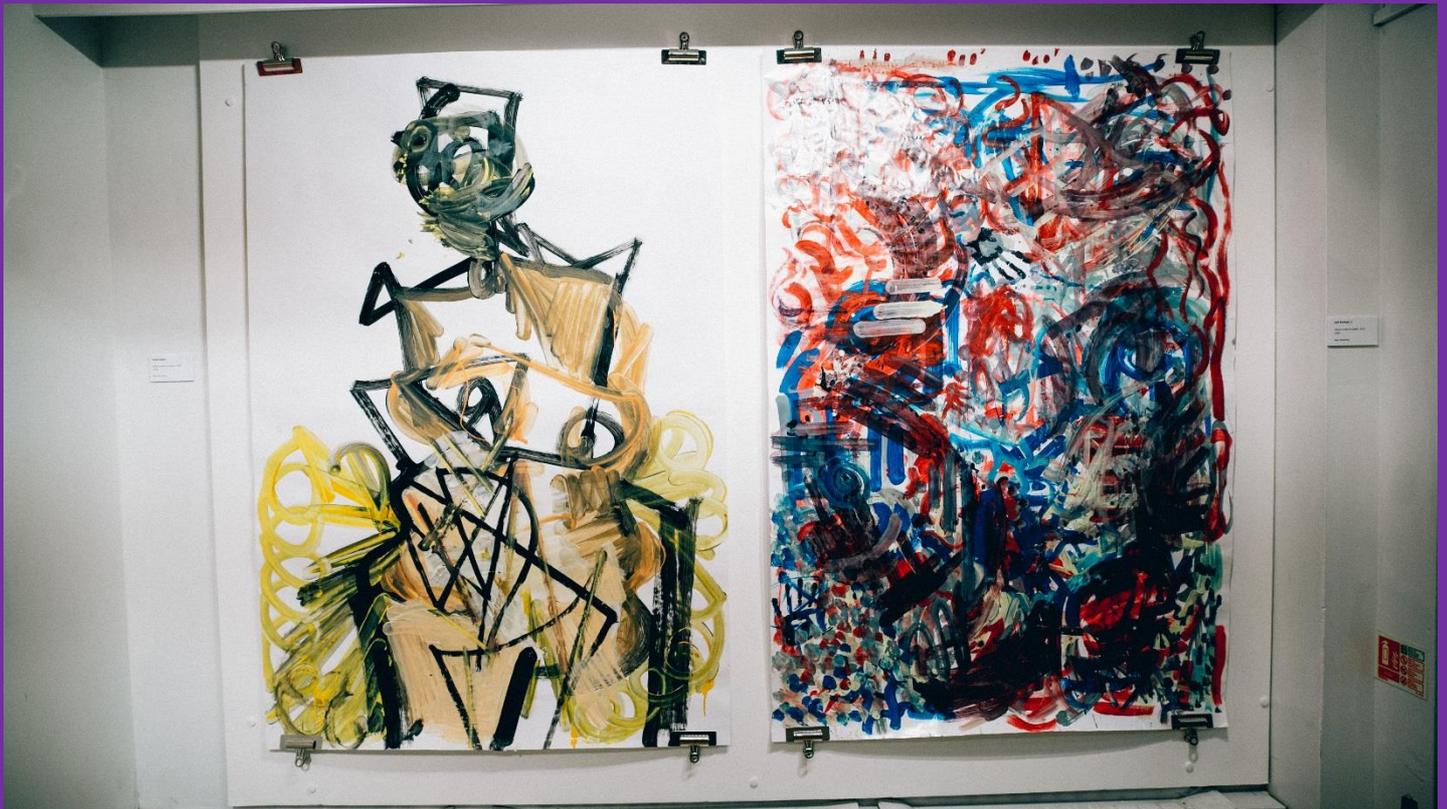
⁵ Kagan, C., Burton, M., Duckett, P., Lawthom, R., & Siddiquee, A. (2011). *Critical Community Psychology*. Chichester: Wiley.

⁶ Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider*. New York: Crossing Press; Anzaldúa, G. (1987) *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

⁷ Read, J., Haslam, N., Sayce, L., & Davies, E. (2006). Prejudice and schizophrenia: a review of the 'mental illness is an illness like any other' approach. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 114(5), 303-318.

⁸ Cromby, J., & Harper, D. J. (2009). Paranoia: a social account. *Theory & Psychology*, 19(3), 335-361.

⁹ hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.



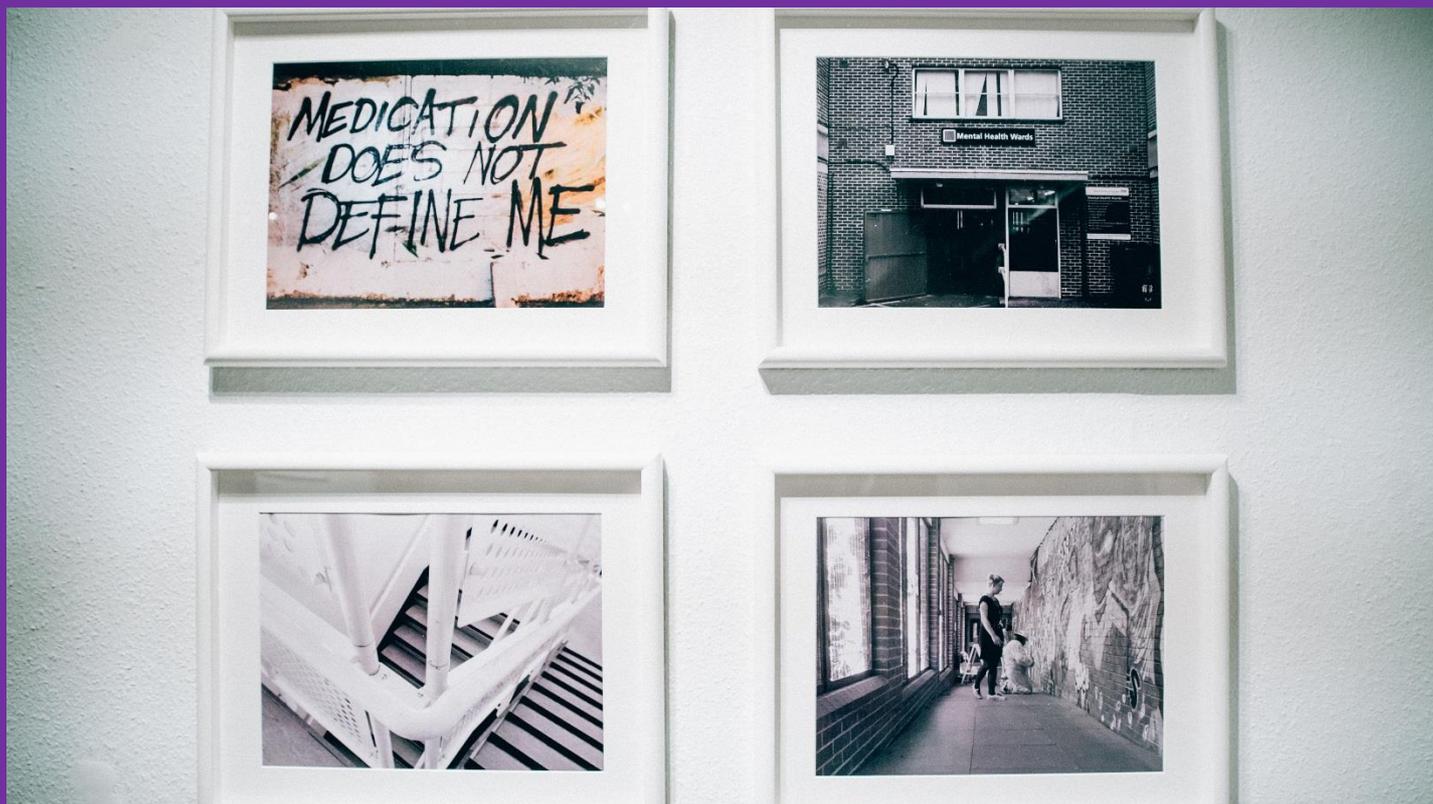
Given the above potential for remarkable and distinctive therapeutic and social impact, **we strongly recommend that CREW be resourced to not only continue, but grow.** However, rather than being treated as a 'model' that can be standardised, CREW needs to be recognised as a *mode of engagement* that requires attentive and responsive facilitation (see also Background). Thus, rather than being replicated en-masse, CREW needs to be resourced to slowly get bigger, enabling it to increasingly yet carefully touch mental health service-users and service-providers.

In the shorter term, this could be the development of an apprenticeship approach that enables future facilitators to learn from current facilitators on a 1:1 basis, thereby increasing CREW's capacity to work with more participants. This approach would also enable CREW to include more facilitators (and therefore participants) from a wide range of genders and ethnicities. However in the longer term **CREW should be resourced to develop a 'facilitate the facilitator' programme**, allowing multiple practitioners within mental health to learn their mode of engagement through a sustained experiential and reflective process. Over time, this would build a collective of CREW facilitators that could support one another in taking CREW back into mental health services, allowing it to be accessible to as many people as possible.

As CREW continues and grows, we further recommend the following:

1. CREW **continues both the sessions and the showcases** – it is the combination of these that makes CREW particularly potent and unique.
2. Ideally, the CREW **sessions are based in a community space**, physically outside of clinically-led services. If this is not possible, then CREW facilitators need to be supported to change the space they are given in ways that are conducive to their mode of engagement.
3. CREW considers how to make more opportunities for more collective dialogue between participants, perhaps using this to **experiment with innovative modes of peer support** that focus on not only individual recovery but social analysis and change.
4. CREW strengthens their participatory elements by supporting participants to become decision-makers and knowledge-producers with regard to how the programme is run. This could be done through **the establishment of an advisory group of past participants** – a kind of 'CREW crew'.

5. The potential of the sessions to **facilitate participatory research on mental health** through creative methodologies, and the showcases to disseminate this, is recognised and resourced.
6. The showcases continue to be community-based and accessible to the public. However, as they grow in reputation and/or size, **the showcases must remain 'grassroots'** – that is, driven by the needs and desires of CREW participants.
7. The **anti-discrimination and social change potential of the showcases is recognised**, resourced and used to inform mainstream mental health campaigning.



This report ends with two poems from student researchers involved in this evaluation. We include these as further testimony to the potential of CREW to affect positive individual, professional and social change.

Vla. 'Findings': A poem by student evaluators

This poem summarises the experiences of CREW participants. It was written by three of the evaluators of CREW – Hannah Gabriela French, Kayleigh Rashbrook and Oriana Tekleab – all undergraduate students from the Clinical and Community Psychology programme at the University of East London.

From the findings it became clear,
 That individuals felt support from family and peers,
 Individuals felt connected and a sense of achievement,
 CREW has helped them to find their place in treatment,
 Creative self-expression has helped improve their mental health,
 They have been able to communicate, heal and just be themselves,
 CREW allowed participants to use art and music to share their stories,
 Express themselves and liberate themselves from their pain.
 Before CREW, hopelessness, sorrow and being left behind.
 Was all they knew.
 Let down by a system that was supposed to protect them
 From the darkness within them.
 Creativity and imagination lead them to innovation and determination.
 People discovered abilities never known beyond their imagination.
 Give support to one another. Through the ups and
 the downs of their journey together.
 Bridges of faith and community were build.
 CREW has provided a safe environment,

Reducing mental health stigma and helping to break the silence,
It's a non-clinical setting with lots of support,
From family, the community all of the above we found when writing our reports.

Vib. 'Manifesto on Psychology': A poem by a student evaluator

This poem was written by one of the evaluators of CREW – Kayleigh Rashbrook, an undergraduate student from the Clinical and Community Psychology programme at the University of East London – summarising how their involvement with CREW has changed their approach to psychology.

Me, Myself and Psych...

Support is important for those with mental health,
I felt happiness from CREW as individuals were supported and able to be themselves,
I was surprised that the general public were so supportive and accepting,
But why was I surprised? Am I so used to those who are 'well' rejecting?
Mental health stigma, a social injustice,
"Those with mental health they can't be trusted",
"They're psycho, unpredictable; it's all in their head",
Psychology is important to help put these statements to bed,
Yeah it's complicated; it's something you can't see,
You can't see the air, but you still need it to breathe,
Psychology has an obligation to understand those with mental health,
To empower and help individuals to love themselves,
Psychology can provide a voice and help speak for others,
But it should be acknowledged that there could be problems with speaking for sufferers,
As Alcott¹⁰ acknowledged speaking for others may be arrogant, unethical and vain,
How can someone more privileged or 'mentally well' ever understand their pain,
Where an individual speaks from can affect meaning and truth in what one says,
But if we don't speak then we are abandoning responsibility to speak out for the oppressed,
Alcott acknowledged these points and so did individuals exploring feminism,
Another inequality, social injustice, just like mental health receiving criticism,
Psychology and mental health contribute by addressing inequality
Speaking out for sufferers, the oppressed, those who are in a minority,
I personally hope we don't let mental health define individuals,
I hope we acknowledge they have an identity and treat them as equals,
I hope to treat those with mental health as an individual not a number,
I want to know 'Sarah' who has a passion for art and had multiple pets when she was younger,
Not 'Your apart of the 1 in 4 with mental health',
This was a frustration and complexity I had with psychology and even myself,
This fixation on statistics and quantitative methodology,
Why is quantitative research more dominant in psychology?¹¹
As Creswell¹² noted quantitative methodology helps to generalise and is important when looking at the tree,
But what about the branches and all of the leaves,
Qualitative methodology allows us to understand perspective¹³,
It allows us to listen to the unheard story and experience of how they live¹⁴
We should listen, go deep and value their opinions and feelings,
Not just give a participant a questionnaire and let that explain their meanings,
How contradictory, holistic, person centred care,

¹⁰ Alcott, L. (1991). The problem of speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique*, 20: 5-32.

¹¹ Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2010). *Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Psychology*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

¹² Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. USA: SAGE Publications.

¹³ Diversi, M. & Moreira, C. (2009). *Between Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy & Praxis*. New York: Left Coast Press, Routledge.

¹⁴ Diversi, M. & Moreira, C. (2009). *Between Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy & Praxis*. New York: Left Coast Press, Routledge.

But let's give you a number and fill in this questionnaire,
Psychology is obliged to listen and empower the individual,
I hope service users can be in charge of their own treatment and relationships between psychologist and client are
equal,
In every instance of verbal communication, power is being negotiated¹⁵,
Mental health sufferers are not the only individuals suffering stigma and hatred,
In a Freedom manifesto¹⁶ they mentioned always fighting to be free,
They spoke of racism, the monitoring of black people and police brutality,
In the Freedom manifesto it was said that each generation has a contribution to make,
And when considering mental health this generation, psychology and I have a silence to break,
Mental health should be embedded in a school curriculum, students are taught sexual health and a balanced diet,
But less is taught about mental health; it seems to be kept more quiet,
During my journey and experiences in psychology,
I have not only learnt the importance of qualitative methodology,
But along with that I have learnt the importance of reflexivity,
A process which has needed active and continuous engagement from me¹⁷,
During research, it's important researchers are aware of their own prejudgments¹⁸,
Understand and unveil their biases and assumptions¹⁹,
I have learnt to be reflexive and it is something I will carry with me,
It has allowed me to understand that socio-cultural and political contexts affect how I see,
I have learnt a lot through my learnings and experience,
Psychology has complexities, possibilities, obligations and it can make a difference.

¹⁵ Riley, S., Schouten, W. & Cahill, S. (2003). Exploring the dynamics of subjectivity and power between researcher and researched. *Forum: QUALITATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH*, 4(2).

¹⁶ The Freedom Manifesto (2016). *A Draft Manifesto to Rebuild the Black Liberation Movement*. Self-published. <http://www.alkalimat.org/fmb/manifesto.pdf>

¹⁷ Mao, L., Mian Akram, A., Chovanec, D., & Underwood, M. L. (2016). Embracing the spiral: Researcher reflexivity in diverse critical methodologies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1): 1-8.

¹⁸ Diversi, M. & Moreira, C. (2009). *Between Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy & Praxis*. New York: Left Coast Press, Routledge.

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