The Wellspring Healthy Living Centre
Dreamtime Arts programme
Evaluation and Social Return on Investment Analysis
Summary Report

Key Points

- The aim of this research was to evaluate the impact of the Big Lottery funded Dreamtime Arts project on its participants. The research also sought to assess the wider social value that the project is creating using a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis.

- The Wellspring Healthy Living Centre’s Dreamtime Arts programme is aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of women with pre-school aged children who are experiencing low to mild levels of anxiety, depression or isolation. It is a free art based group programme accessed by referral from a family support worker, health visitor or G.P.

- Social Return on Investment is a framework for measuring and accounting for change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It seeks to capture social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them.

- Mental wellbeing is a fundamental component of good health. Mental illness is hugely costly to the individual and to society, and a lack of mental wellbeing underpins many physical diseases, unhealthy lifestyles and social inequalities in health.

- The evaluation includes before and after data from 24 people who took part in Dreamtime Arts sessions during the first 9 months of the project (April-December 2014).

Key Findings

- 95% of referrals come from health visitors and the family support workers, with the remainder coming from local G.P.s and primary care.

- Using before-and-after validated questionnaires the evaluation found clear evidence of benefits accruing from the Dreamtime Arts programme to its participants. At the end of a ten week term of engaging with the programme, 93% reported improved mental wellbeing (n=13) and 85% reported improved social wellbeing (n=13).

- Participant self-reports provide evidence of wider positive impacts including: a growing confidence to using available childcare, a corresponding increase in the wellbeing and confidence of participants’ children and improved relationships with partners and family.

- Participants and external stakeholders attribute the benefits of the Dreamtime Arts programme to Wellspring’s long service history of seeking to engage with all parts of the diverse local community, to the informal nature of the groups, the support of other project participants and most importantly to the personal qualities of the project staff at the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre.

- SROI analysis identified a significant social return for the investment made; for every £1 spent on the Dreamtime Arts Project there is £3.54 of social value created.
Wellspring Healthy Living Centre
Dreamtime Arts programme

The Wellspring Healthy Living Centre’s Dreamtime Arts programme is aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of women with pre-school age children who live in the BS5 postcode area in Bristol. The programme is targeted at women with low to moderate mental health disorders such as post-natal depression and anxiety, who are survivors or victims of domestic violence and abuse or whom have expressed feeling isolated.

The Dreamtime Arts programme offers participants up to two ten-week terms of participatory group-based arts and craft activity that support wellbeing. The project is underpinned by models of: asset-based community development, psychosocial intervention and peer-support.

The groups are run at the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre (WHLC) as well as the Limes Nursery School and Children’s Centre and the Bannerman Road Community Academy and Children’s Centre. A contracted Artist facilitates the group at WHLC with support from WHLC’s Arts and Wellbeing Officer, with the satellite groups also being facilitated by the Arts and Wellbeing Officer.

The group is free to attend and the support provided includes a free on-site crèche during the 2 hours that the group runs each week. The support provided also includes referral to other activities offered at WHLC as well as in supporting access into other follow-up arts based activities, education and training at the end of the Dreamtime programme.

In a previous evaluation of the Wellspring Community Kitchen as part of the first round of the Big Lottery funded South West Wellbeing Programme1 (SWWB) positive change was identified in participants’ mental health through the development of new social networks and the sharing of cooking skills between people from a broad range of cultures and traditions2. The current evaluation sought to build upon this evidence, and to examine the wider social and economic value of a leading Wellspring Healthy Living Centre project.

Importance of mental health & wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is a fundamental component of good health. Mental illness is hugely costly to the individual and to society, and lack of mental wellbeing underpins many physical diseases, unhealthy lifestyles and social inequalities in health3.

It is estimated that mental health problems impose a total economic and social cost of over £105bn a year4. The economy loses more than £30bn a year from sickness absence and unemployment caused by mental ill health; while treating mental health problems cost the NHS and social care over £21bn a year. But the majority of the financial burden of mental illness falls on patients and their families, with the impact on quality of life costing £53.6bn.

Taken together, perinatal depression, anxiety and psychosis carry a total long-term cost to society of about £8.1 billion for each one-year cohort of births in the UK. This is equivalent to a cost of just under £10,000 for every single birth in the country. Over a fifth of total costs (£1.7 billion are borne by the public sector), with the bulk of these falling on the NHS and

social services (£1.2 billion). The development and escalation of perinatal mental illnesses can often be prevented through early identification and appropriate management. Even if the illness itself is not preventable, it is possible to prevent many of the negative effects of perinatal mental illness through appropriate care and treatment. However, just 3% of Clinical Commissioning Groups in England have a strategy for commissioning perinatal mental health services and a large majority have no plans to develop one.

Access to Mental Health Support

Despite a wealth of published evidence about effective interventions to promote mental wellbeing and prevent and treat mental illness, both anxiety and depression often go undiagnosed and many individuals do not seek treatment. Certain groups are known to have particular difficulty in accessing mental health services, especially those in low-income groups and those with other health and social problems.

Research Aim and Methods

This research is part of a wider University of the West of England (UWE)-led study of projects funded by the Big Lottery under the South West Wellbeing initiative. In this study we sought to evaluate the impact of the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre’s Dreamtime Arts project on its participants, and examine the social value that the project is creating using Social Return on Investment methodology.

Finally we used the RE-AIM framework to review the learning from evaluation.

What is Social Return on Investment?

SROI is a framework for measuring and accounting for change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It seeks to measure social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them. SROI captures wider forms of value often left out of more traditional methods of economic evaluation such as cost benefit analysis.

Interest in social value has been raised by The Public Services (Social Value) Act (2013). The Act requires public bodies to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

The act defines social value as “the benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”.

This evaluation focuses on 9 months operation of the Dreamtime Arts Project (April – December 2014). Quantitative and qualitative data have been used to inform this SROI. Measures of mental health and wellbeing were collected from participants as part of the project’s ongoing outcome monitoring. These were analysed together with qualitative data collected through participant focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders. Two focus groups of four participants were undertaken and six interviews were undertaken with WHLC staff and other key stakeholders.

Project Beneficiaries

These were women with pre-school children who live in postcode area BS5. Beneficiaries were referred by health professionals because they satisfied at least one or more of the following categories:

- Currently suffering from a common low to moderate level mental health disorder, namely post-natal depression or anxiety;
- Survivors of domestic violence and abuse;
- Socially isolated.

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6 PSSRU. The costs of perinatal mental health problems, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/59885/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_Bauer,%20M_Bauer_Costs_perinatal_%20mental_2014_Bauer_Costs_perinatal_mental_2014_author.pdf
The area of BS5 consists of the wards of: Easton and Lawrence Hill. These wards are ethnically diverse, with a higher than average proportion of young people and with higher than average levels of deprivation across a range of indices including: income, employment, health and disability, education skills and training, barriers to housing and services, living environment and crime.

**Self-reported Health Issues at Registration**

The average age of the participants at registration was 34 years (SD 5.5); the majority (62.5%) identified as white British and the large majority (87.5%) spoke English as their first language. The majority of participants were experiencing a low to moderate common mental health disorder, namely: post-natal depression and anxiety. Some will be survivors or victims of domestic violence and abuse and most were feeling socially isolated.

“*I’m still here. If I hadn’t have had something to look forward to, I don’t know what... I would have done, yeah, because things get pretty crazy and... yeah, it was a lifeline, and I was very reluctant and sad to give it up. But yeah, it has given me a sort of hope to try and persevere and do things on my own.*

**Dreamtime Arts participant**

“I definitely feel more confident and I definitely feel happier when I go away from here, so yeah that has changed things in my broader life because my partner has benefitted from it.”

**Dreamtime Arts participant**

**Outcomes for Social Isolation**

There was a statistically significant increase in beneficiary social connectedness on the Friendship Scale scores from baseline ($p<0.0031$). What we find when looking at the raw data is over half of the beneficiaries show significant improvement on the Friendship Scale.

**Outcomes for feeling life is worthwhile**

There was a statistically significant increase in participant’s sense that life is worthwhile. On the Life Worthwhile scale scores from baseline ($M=1.36$, Range = 0.66 – 2.06) to follow-up ($M=3.86$, Range = 1.51–6.21), showed statistically significant improvement ($p<0.0036$). What we find when looking at the raw data is all but one participant felt that their sense that life is worthwhile had stayed the same or improved.

When explored further, the Friendship Scale data shows that 12 (92%) participants experienced an increased socially connectedness score, indicating increased friendship acuity with one participant experiencing no change, and 1 participating experiencing a decreased friendship scale score.
Additional Reported Outcomes

Analysis of quantitative outcome data collected by the project provides evidence of additional significant benefits for some Dreamtime Arts participants in terms of: reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, improved social and mental wellbeing and increased levels of low level physical activity. There is also evidence that the Dreamtime Arts programme also had an impact in terms of suicide reduction and supporting participants into accessing vital child-care.

Less tangible outcomes reported by the project worker include:

- Participants have set up an online etsy shop ([www.etsy.com/uk](http://www.etsy.com/uk)) to sell items that they learnt to make during the Dreamtime Arts programme;
- Participants are going on to enrol in other classes at WHLC including the Art-shine group;
- Participants enrolling in a creative class at City of Bristol College;
- Participants supporting each other by looking after each other’s children, and in one case even assisting in the running of their small business.

Social Return on Investment Analysis

The SROI analysis involves a stage-based process that involves mapping outcomes from the perspective of stakeholders; defining the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes; evidencing outcomes and giving them a value; identifying those aspects of change that would have happened anyway or are a result of other factors to ensure that they are taken out of the analysis; and then calculating the SROI.

**Inputs**

The total expenditure for Dreamtime Arts in 2014/15 was £18,223. This includes funding for a full-time Wellbeing Worker, general overheads and running expenses for the project and some funding for training for WHLC staff and volunteers and project participants.

**Outputs – Delivering the Project**

Looking at attendance data during the first 9 months of operation of the Dreamtime Arts project (April 2014-Dec 2014), 24 women attended at least one term (6 of these women received two terms). In total, these participants attended 199 sessions out of a maximum possible total of 294 sessions. This gives an average attendance rate of 68% with each participant attending an average of just over 8 sessions each. But on a personal level to the participants a key output is utilisation of the crèche facilities:

> I saw this happening and asked about it. I was really excited, but also nervous, not about meeting the group but about leaving my boy in the crèche for the first time, because I had never done that before.
> Project participant
Valuing outcomes

In SROI we often use financial proxies to estimate the social value of non-traded goods to different stakeholders. By estimating this value through the use of financial proxies and combining these valuations, we arrive at an estimate of the total social value created by an intervention.

The table below provides a summary of some of the key outcomes included in the SROI analysis and the way in which they were valued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Financial Proxy</th>
<th>Value per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in symptoms of anxiety</td>
<td>Reduction in 47% participants</td>
<td>The cost of six sessions of counselling</td>
<td>11x180=£1,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved social wellbeing and improved relationships with partner/family</td>
<td>Improvement in 85% participants</td>
<td>Cost of social club membership and attendance at activities</td>
<td>20x100=£2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved physical activity</td>
<td>Improvement in 42% participants</td>
<td>Cost of gym membership/local activity session. Calculated as 1 session per fortnight for one year.</td>
<td>10x50.40=£504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved mental well-being</td>
<td>Improvement in 93% participants</td>
<td>A course of CBT to build psychological resilience and self-esteem</td>
<td>22x930=£20,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced symptoms of depression</td>
<td>Improvement in 53% participants</td>
<td>The cost of six sessions of CBT</td>
<td>13x558=£7,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support into use of crèche / child-care</td>
<td>50% of participants</td>
<td>Eight hours of crèche provision</td>
<td>12x35=£420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>Stated by one participant.</td>
<td>The value of delayed suicide prevention for one year</td>
<td>1x66,797=£67,797</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact Map: outcomes and values scaled up for all 24 participants

Calculating the Social Value

SROI analysis found that the total impact for the 24 participants who received an intervention in the first 9 months of the Dreamtime Arts project is £100,414. The SROI ratio, is £1: £3.54.

This analysis has focused almost entirely on the benefit of the Dreamtime Arts group to the mothers, as we were unable to measure any long-term impact on the children. Even if the long term benefits to the children of the participants was only estimated to be equal to that experienced by the mothers, the SROI ratio would probably double to £7.08.

The table opposite gives an indication of some of the proxy values used to support this analysis. The full impact map together with a more detailed sensitivity analysis can be found in the full report.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research

The evaluation and SROI built upon considerable qualitative data collected on site from the participants. This was a tremendous achievement given that the participants saw their arts time as valuable me-time and part of their weekly routine where they are momentarily free of the demands of childcare. Given the participants’ personal histories and their high levels needs, this research was able to benefit from an opportunity to explore an issue rarely studied from a social value perspective.

From a research perspective the number of participants with matched baseline and follow-up
data was small, so there is some uncertainty in the results of quantitative analyses; hence only a few of the validated items provide statistically significant results. With a larger sample more effect may have been captured.

A broader range of external stakeholders would also have allowed for the gathering of broader impact. This means that some of the benefits that are important to stakeholders could not be monetized. With regards to this evaluation, it is notable that the focus group participants talked passionately about how attending the Dreamtime Arts had impacted on their values. Their participation has created a sense of solidarity, developed pride and belief in themselves as women. Previously entrenched attitudes they had about themselves began to change in relation to learning, figures of authority and a fuller realisation of their own potential.

But most significantly of all, we know from the available evidence that much of the cost of perinatal mental illness arises from the adverse impacts of the condition on the children.\(^7\) Again, due to the short-term nature of the evaluation we have not been able to factor in the long term value generated through improved emotional, educational and physical development for the participants’ children. Recent evidence suggests that this value could add up to a total sum two or three times the value of the outcomes generated for the mother. The impact of this missing value is that the total social return of Dreamtime Arts might be undervalued significantly.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this evaluation and SROI report we have monetised the benefits of the Dreamtime project to its beneficiaries and other agencies working with the community in the BS5 area. The report demonstrates a significant social return for the investment made, and the feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders clearly illustrate the programme’s positive impact to beneficiary’ mental health, wellbeing and life circumstances.

**Areas of Learning**

Using the Re-AIM\(^8\) review framework we can summarise some key areas of learning from the evaluation:

- **Reach.** The strong referral route from local health professionals shows the project clearly reaches young mothers enduring perinatal mental health challenges. Given the ethnic mix of the participants this project is unique in providing women from BME groups an opportunity to gain access to an arts project. This is contrary to recent national evidence which suggests that women from BME backgrounds are significantly less likely to participate in all types of art and craft activities; including painting/drawing.\(^9\)

- **Effectiveness.** There is some baseline-follow up evidence of short-term impacts. There is plausible evidence of longer term and wide ranging personal and social impact. No negative outcomes to beneficiaries or partner agencies were identified. SROI analysis helps communicate the overall social value of the project.

- **Adoption.** The project evolved from a complex portfolio of initiatives at the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre. It embeds well with other initiatives including the Wellbeing Programme that has seen local GP practices referring adults with a range of mental health challenges to social prescribing type interventions.\(^10\)

- **Implementation.** Like other projects in the SWWB portfolio this project draws upon a clear set of models to enhance participant wellbeing:
  - a) Asset-based community development
  - b) Psycho-social interventions
  - c) Peer-support.

- **Maintenance.** The project is well established and has good throughput. There is positive qualitative

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\(^7\) PISSRU. 2014. The costs of perinatal mental health problems, \url{http://prints.lse.ac.uk/5985/1/} Lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_Bauer,%20M_Bauer_Costs_perinatal_%20mental_2014_Bauer_Costs_perinatal_mental_2014_author.pdf


evidence of long term effects and the SROI sensitivity analysis shows a greater return on investment of £3.54:£1. Secure funding represents a major problem for the future of the project.

What is the RE-AIM Framework?

RE-AIM is a useful framework for reviewing community projects that have public health goals.

Reach
Does the intervention reach the target population?

Effectiveness
Does the intervention achieve the assumed goals, without negative outcomes?

Adoption
Was the intervention broadly adopted at the community level?

Implementation
Was the intervention consistently implemented at a reasonable cost?

Maintenance
Does the intervention have the ability to be sustained, with long-lasting effects?

A key concern for the Wellspring Healthy living Centre is the need to secure ongoing funding once the current Big Lottery funding ends. This report provides a tool for working with local commissioners and other funding bodies to identify possible sources of funding to secure ongoing delivery of the project. It also highlights ways in which improvements could be made to the project to maximise benefit to individuals and other local projects and services. More work with local GP and Primary Care services may help to raise the profile of the project at a grassroots level. They could target their registered patients, working with the GP practices and perhaps provide an alternative route to the IAPT service.

Key recommendations arising from this study are:

- Maintain and review data collection methods used in the light of the outcomes captured by this SROI and identify ways to capture all relevant outcomes to the project and future funders whilst ensuring that paperwork is minimised.
- To continue to seek to make the Dreamtime Arts programme as accessible to as many different women in the local community as possible, with a particular focus on helping women to attend for the first time.
- To consider further strengthening of the link between the project and the health visitors and family support workers referring to it by giving them an opportunity to pop in to the group from time to time to provide experience and expertise beyond what is offered on the project.

This study was led by Olly Biggs with support from Dr. Richard Kimberlee (UWE), Mat Jones (UWE) and Phil Aubrey (Well UK).

We would like to acknowledge and thank all the Dreamtime Arts staff and volunteers, beneficiaries and partner agency staff linked to the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre for their support and assistance in undertaking this research.

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For full Evaluation & SROI Report and details of the wider evaluation of the South West Wellbeing programme see: http://westbank.org.uk/ or contact: olly.biggs@uwe.ac.uk

For details on the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre www.wellspringhlc.org