

Wild About Kirkley



Fictional Soil Superheroes created at First Light Festival with plant waste and foraged inks. An activity led by lead artists The Third Person, to ignite interest in the importance of soil health.

Impact Report March 2023

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Chloe from Real Veg teaching participants how to make a good compost to enrich the soil in the community garden.

“Enjoyable and really informative. Learnt about plants I walk past every day and had no idea they were edible or how interesting they were. Relaxed, friendly, great group of people - helped to stop at the end for lunch and have a good natter.

Thank you.”

Lizzie (attended one of our forage walks)

About the project

The Wild About Kirkely (WAK) project was based in Kirkley, Lowestoft and worked to share creative skills and build community connections through the development of a community garden space. The project was open to all and worked with a broad spectrum of participants. The outcomes of the project focused on increasing wellbeing, reducing loneliness and increasing skills.

WAK was developed off the back of previous work in the community where Suffolk Artlink had partnered with First Light Festival and Community Action Suffolk. The previous work had begun the development of a new community garden in some disused land beside The Pantry Project (food bank) in Kirkley.

WAK provided the opportunity to further these developments and partner with experienced community artists, The Third Person (TTP); a collective formed by Kasia Posen and Carrie Phoenix who focus on exploring the identity of place through community, architecture and flora and fauna in their work. TTP worked to engage the community through a varied programme of activity, collaborating with a soil scientist, a forager, sustainable growers and other aligned artists to explore Soil and Land as an overarching theme.

Through this programme, WAK built a partnership with The Pantry to embed the new community garden as an asset for Kirkley, while strengthening the bond between a diverse group of individuals, connected through this work. Sessions provided new perspectives on soil, nature connection, growing, foraging and creativity. From developing mystical soil superheroes to sensory forage tours; WAK provided opportunities to connect participants to each other and to nature.

“It wasn’t that long ago that I didn’t know any of these people, and now they’re all my friends.”

The transformation of a blank patch of land provided not only fresh, organic produce for the food bank, but a platform for skill sharing and connection.

“This has been a once in a lifetime experience being part of this project... to think of how much we’ve done together and how the garden has changed, it’s just wonderful.”

Sessions were predominantly delivered at The Pantry/in the community garden, with outreach workshops shared at Red Oak Primary School and at The Kirkley Centre too. Overall, the project reached 279 individuals through regular sessions, outreach and events.

In addition to regular sessions and events, WAK delivered work at both the Summer and Winter First Light Festival offerings, reaching audiences in excess of 10,000 people.

Artists and Collaborators

Genevieve Rudd

Genevieve Rudd is from/based in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk and has been leading participatory arts projects since 2011. This includes developing programmes with people in museums, galleries, theatres, libraries, schools, care homes, festivals and outdoor public spaces. Since 2018, Genevieve has been an Associate Artist/Tutor at the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia. The creative projects she leads encourage closer looking and ask about the places and people around us

Jon Tyler

Jon Tyler is an experienced forager and bush-craft practitioner. As a freelance practitioner of outdoor activities and hedge-craft he leads an array of wildlife awareness, mushroom identification and wild-food courses across East Anglia.

Real Veg CSA

Real Veg (Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)) is a local growing initiative based at Wakelyns agroforestry farm, who are committed to growing ethical, organic, healthy food for the local community through their agroecological & regenerative practice, and dedication to building local community.

Willow Phoenix

Willow Phoenix are based at Wakelyns Agroforestry farm, they deliver workshops on building creative, structural and living willow sculptures as well as garden furniture and basket weaving.

Prof. Brain Reid, Professor of Soil Science UEA and Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Research

Brian is Professor of Soil Science at the University of East Anglia. Brian's expertise includes soil science, soil carbon, soil ecosystem services, biochar, contaminated land, remediation, pollutant/contaminant fate in the environment.

Partners

The Third Person

Carrie Phoenix and Kasia Posen form The Third Person who are experienced visual and community artists. Their collective work explores the identity of place through community, architecture and flora and fauna.

Kirkley Pantry

The Pantry model is a national initiative to create a sustainable and long-term solution to food poverty. Members pay a small weekly fee for which they can choose at least ten items of food each week, along with additional opportunities of volunteering and training. Established during COVID, Kirkley Pantry has over 80 members

Community Action Suffolk

The Kirkley Centre is owned and run by Community Action Suffolk as a community hub for the Kirkley and Lowestoft area. The Centre provides a warm welcome to residents and tourists to the area through its visitor and community information, along with space for a wide range of charities, community groups and training providers.

First Light Festival

First Light is a multi-arts festival that celebrates the first light of the summer solstice at Britain's most easterly point - Lowestoft. The festival team works closely with local authorities and stakeholders to create and deliver an event that contributes to the regeneration of Lowestoft and its seafront. The aim of the festival is that it will be a place making event both regionally and nationally.

Suffolk Artlink

We are a participatory arts charity. We develop and deliver inclusive arts programmes that support peoples' health and wellbeing. Our creative projects help people transform their lives through the arts by bringing skills, support networks, confidence and joy to communities in the East.



Louisa, one of our participants watering newly planted fruit trees and a rose in the garden.

“Amazing day, learned so much and everyone was so friendly. ”

(Eileen, participant)

Who took part:

Kirkley Pantry members	23
Kirkley Pantry volunteers	4
Kirkley People’s Forum	2
Red Oak Primary School Students	88
Family carers (through Suffolk Artlink)	8
Ladies Group, The Pantry	13
First Light Longest Days of Summer audience	10,000
Wild About Kirkley Volunteers	2
Core Participants	49

Who else was involved?

Sheryl Rumble, Morrisons Community Champion, Lowestoft

Sally Connick, The Literacy Trust | Get Suffolk Reading

Brian J. Reid | Professor of Soil Science | Associate Dean for Science (Innovation) School of Environmental Sciences

Number of Participatory Sessions:

30

Locations: Kirkley Pantry / Kirkley Centre / Lowestoft South Beach / Red Oak Primary School / Kirkley Cemetery



Our participants landscaping the new community garden and sorting soil and organic matter for use in our raised beds.

The programme

- Introduction to the project and soil workshop at the Pantry - meet the artists, learn about the project, Real Veg delivered a presentation on soil and soil health.
- Garden maintenance and planning - planning how the group envisaged the garden.
- Participants develop a new set of accessible foraging walks with professional forager Jon Tyler. Participants with access needs led the design of the walks.
- Jon Tyler led foraging walks which included food sampling and tours of different parts of Kirkley followed by tasting menu of foraged foods.
- Carrie and Kasia delivered a soil focused creative workshop in collaboration with Proff. Brian Reid at First Light Festival June 2022.
- The group delivered 2 accessible foraging walks around Kirkley as part of Heritage Open Days, walks open to the public. Foraging walks included food sampling and tours of different parts of Kirkley followed by tasting menu of foraged foods and sensory activities.
- Genevieve Rudd delivered creative activities on our new garden, activities included solar dyeing and creating cyanotypes as part of Heritage Action Zones.
- Group members designed a new sign for the garden to build more awareness of the new community asset.
- Applied to fundraise for a Story Chair in the garden.
- Carrie and Kasia delivered creative activity at Red Oak primary School in collaboration with Suffolk Music Hub and the Literacy Trust. Workshops were themed around the community garden, biodiversity and plants with a view to connect the school with the garden space for future use.
- Lantern design and making workshops delivered by Willow Phoenix to The Pantry members, Red Oak Primary and Brave Art (Suffolk Artlink's art training course for adults with learning disabilities).
- Participants parade their willow lanterns as part of First Light's Winter Celebration.
- Awarded money from Morrisons for a Story Chair, Chair was made and delivered to the garden in time for inclusion in Lowestoft's Story Trail.
- Carrie and Kasia co-delivered a creative soil workshop at Red Oak Primary with Prof Brain Reid.
- Open Garden Celebration, we opened the garden to the community with free activities for adults and children, culminating with storytelling and community feast

Throughout the project we built a small team of group members and garden volunteers who maintained the garden throughout the different stages of the project, from growing to harvesting our produce for inclusion in the foodbank's offerings of freshly grown vegetables.



Prof Brian Reid delivering a soil science workshop for First Light's Longest Days of Summer event.



Carrie and Kasia delivering a creative workshop for First Light's Longest Days of Summer event. The activity was painting with inks made from plant waste, and exploring form and shape through cut-outs of soil creatures and mythical soil superheroes.

The impacts of Wild About Kirkley

Wild About Kirkley is a place-based project in Kirkley, Lowestoft.

The impacts of the project are aimed at :

Supporting community connections and wellbeing. To connect local residents to their local environment through sessions exploring food, art and the environment. Integrate the community into high-profile local cultural offers such as First Light Festival, Heritage Action Zones and Heritage Open Days.

To increase wellbeing through the development of a community garden at The Pantry. To engage The Pantry's community in exploring the wellbeing benefits of engaging with nature and being outdoors through the new community garden.

To learn new skills through engaging in a creative program of events and co creating a community garden.

To reduce loneliness of participants by creating a safe, shared space, for a diverse community.

Inviting participants to explore issues around the environment.

How we measured impact:

Artlink used quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate impact. The two recognised tools for quantitative data exploring wellbeing and loneliness were; The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and The Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool CtEL). Our intention for the WEMWBS and CtEL tools was to measure and assess the cumulative impact of sessions reflecting how people felt over a sustained period rather than in the moment.

These tools were not appropriate for one off sessions with school children. Artlink used child feedback forms for these sessions. These asked three simple questions, relating to the outcomes, with accessible smiley faces to circle for the answers:

1. Did the workshop make you feel happy;
2. Did the workshop make you feel better about being in school today; and
3. Did you learn anything new from the workshop?

Increased skills were recorded by asking the simple question: 'Did you learn any new skills with us today?' Yes or No?

Other general feedback was gathered as supportive qualitative data along with Stories of Most Significant Change to share a balanced view of the project.

All tools convincingly evidence that the project has had a positive impact on our participants.

Increased wellbeing:

WAK has provided a welcoming and safe space to connect. Sessions not only provided a social space but somewhere that individuals could learn new skills, share stories, knowledge and enjoy creative rest-bite from everyday commitments and struggles.

The project created opportunities for individuals to meet diverse people from their community who they normally may not connect with. The varied backgrounds of participants has created opportunities for broad perspectives to be shared and new, resilient friendships to form. WAK has reduced feelings of isolation through the delivery of its programme, which has improved participants' sense of wellbeing. Below are examples of lasting connections, enriched lives and increased confidence resulting in increased wellbeing:

"I feel happy and I like being outside." Child participant

'Super friendly, relaxing, inclusive, insightful, thoughtful and inspiring.' Adult participant

The project has worked with individuals dealing with major anxiety and health issues that have made it very difficult to leave the house. WAK has provided a safe and welcoming environment to build connections and confidence:

"I've had so much fun. It was lovely making things as a community. Thank you for giving me a place to socialise." Adult participant

'Excelently organised and executed range of creative and immersive activities which inspire, enthral and excite. Kasia, Carrie and Jon combine their extensive skills to enable participants to feel so much better, alive and rejuvenated...'

'I'm loving life. My uni course is the best...I wouldn't be doing any of what I'm doing now if it hadn't been for this project.'

WAK has celebrated the diversity of its participants by working with them on developing aspects of work, such as the Sensory Forage Guide.

Off the back of earlier work in the area, TTP and forager Jon Tyler devised an Explore Kirkely Guide, however the routes were long and not wholly accessible for those with mobility or sensory needs.

This project enabled TTP to collaborate with two key participants with very different health needs to produce a guide that explores different sensory perspectives of nature and foraging. The route is short and flat, making it ideal for wheelchair users and those unable to walk long distances too. The route has brought enjoyment to those who might not have been able to access other local activities.

'Best thing I have done on a Sunday morning for a long while.' Adult participant

'Such an interesting, informative and enthusiastic trip. Would love to go around again!' Adult participant.

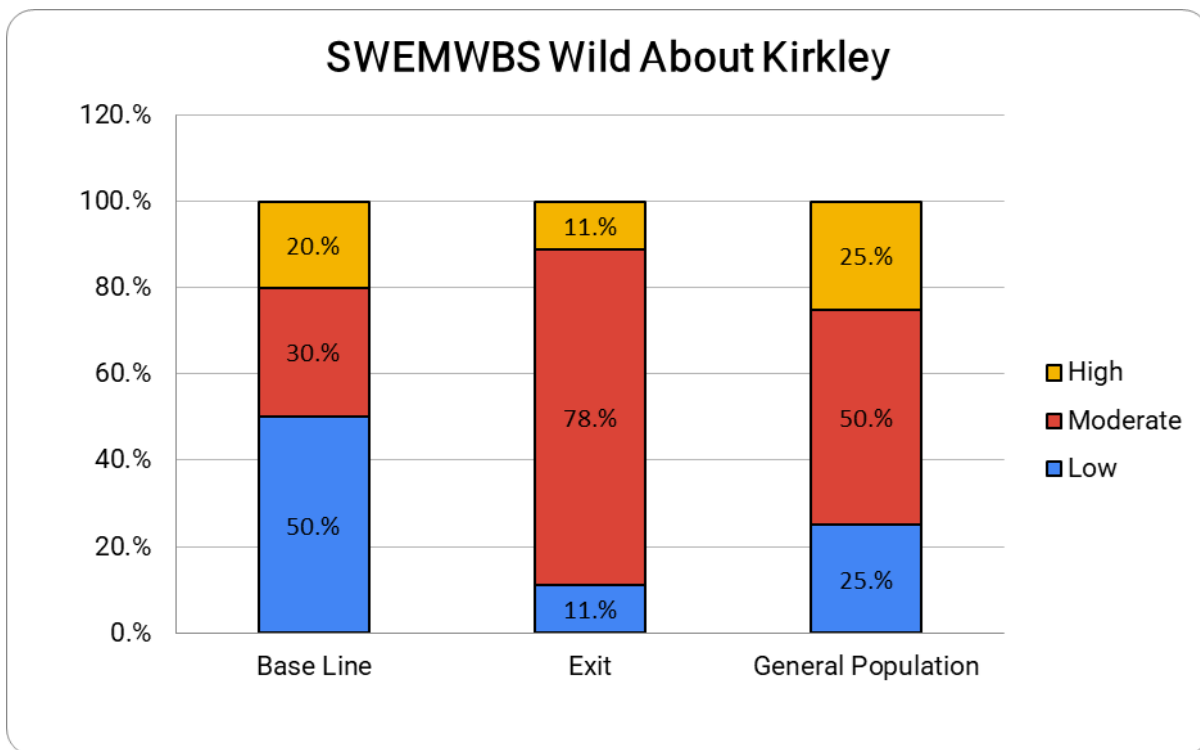
Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

At entry to our programme 50% of participants sampled reported low levels of well-being. Only 11 percent of respondents reported low levels of well-being at the end of the programme demonstrating an increase to wellbeing.

There was a drop in High level of wellbeing by the exit point, but the overall improvement to wellbeing massively outweighs the low levels. It is worth noting that there are many factors that can influence a participants wellbeing outside of the project - this is why it is important to take into account the qualitative data in demonstrating the overall improvement from sessions.

SWEMWBS is a well-researched and evidenced based way of measuring well-being in children 13+ and adults. <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

SWEMWBS consists of just seven positively phrased statements about feelings and thoughts with participants' responses recorded using a scale.



“Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. To break this down, how people feel refers to emotions such as happiness or anxiety. How people function refers to things such as their sense of competence or their sense of being connected to those around them. How people evaluate their life as a whole is captured in their satisfaction with their lives, or how they rate their lives in comparison with the best possible life.

You can think of someone as having high well-being if they function well, have positive feelings day-to-day and overall and think their lives are going well; we call this ‘flourishing’. Similarly, you can think of someone as having low well-being if they do not function well and have negative feelings day-to-day and overall.” Measuring Well-being A guide for practitioners, Juliet Michaelson, Sorcha Mahony and Jonathan Schifferes.

Well-being is distinct from mental health. People may have a low well-being score, but not be mentally ill although persistent low levels of well-being has an impact on mental and physical health.

Reduced loneliness:

WAK tackled loneliness by offering participants opportunities to connect with others and develop new support networks within their community.

This project began off the back of an extremely isolating time for all. The community of Kirkley, including the lowest income families using The Pantry were hit hard during the pandemic; WAK offered a space where people could not only connect with others who knew what they might be experiencing, but also drew in a wider array of individuals, creating opportunities of more resilient friendships and legacy.

‘Everyone here is so warm. You can see how much they genuinely care for each other.’

It can be difficult attending groups, especially if you struggle with mental health and feelings of loneliness. WAK had the consistency and expertise of TTP delivering regularly, to build to a welcoming, safe and unifying space to join. This consistency combined with collaborative sessions offered a hybrid mix of experiential, skills-based workshops and social get-togethers that offered something for everyone. This unique blend, combined with predominantly using the same venue, made it easier for Pantry members to join in and others to build confidence

with the space. Sessions offered opportunities to share skills, experiences and laugh with strangers to break down social anxieties quicker than traditional workshops.

‘With your project, I come in anxious but leave elevated... I meet beautiful people like I and L...’

‘Thank you for helping me make friends.’

‘...I met new people and Jon is so passionate and knowledgeable. It was lovely to have my access needs taken into account and not be left behind’

‘This was a very welcoming meeting especially since I have just moved Lowestoft and wanting to help connect with the local community...’

The Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool

This tool contains the following statements:

1. I am content with my friendships and relationships
2. I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time
3. My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be

To each of these statements respondents to give one of the following answers: Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly Agree / Don't Know.

In order to score somebody's answers, their responses are coded as follows:

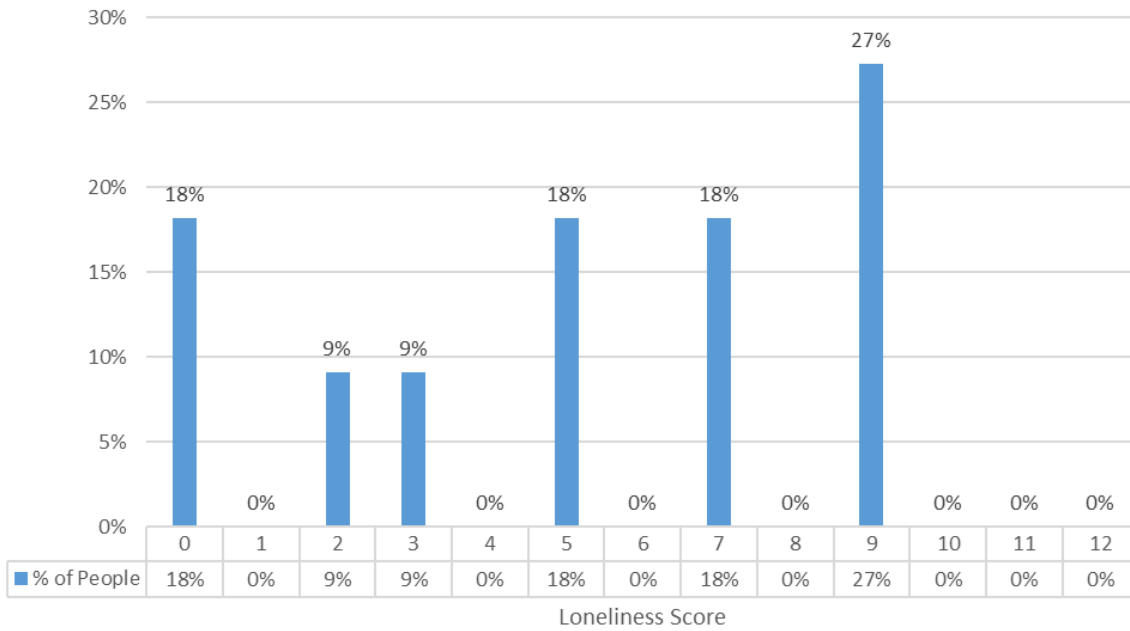
Response	Score
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	3
Neutral	2
Agree	1
Strongly agree	0

The scores for each individual question need to be added together. This gives a possible range of scores from 0 to 12, which can be read as follows:

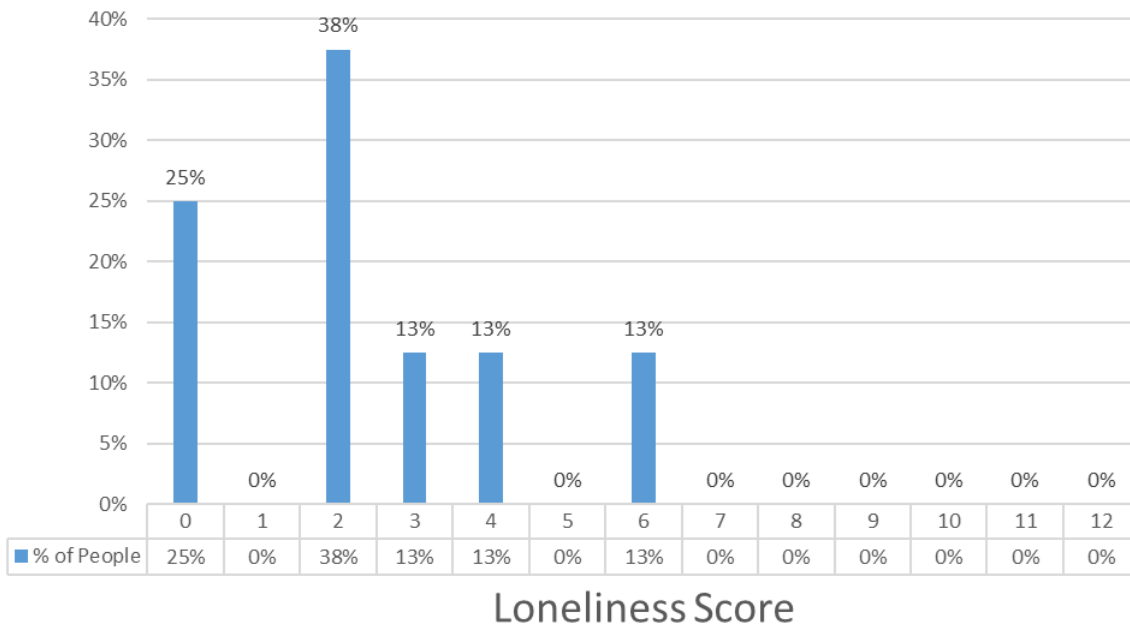


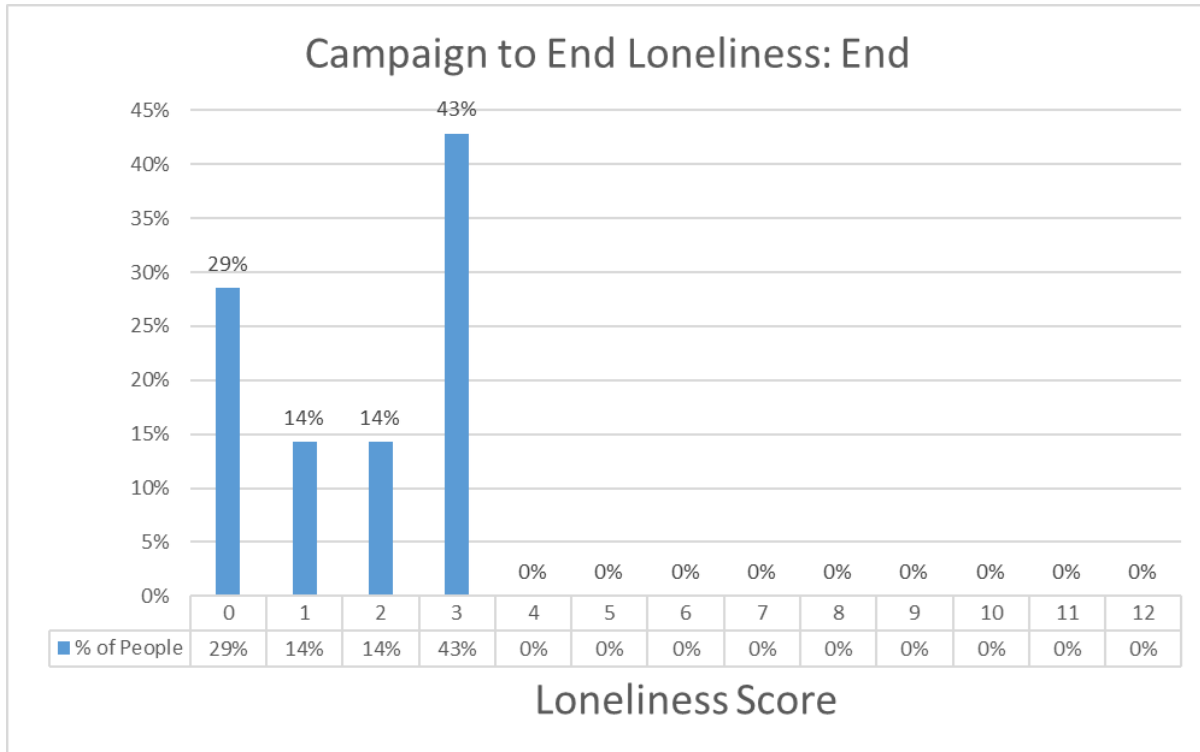
Suffolk Artlink measured at entry, mid-point and exit. The sample size was 11.

Campaign to End Loneliness: Base Line



Campaign to End Loneliness: Mid





Increased skills:

96.5% of participants answered ‘Yes’ when asked ‘Have you learnt any new skills with us?/ Did you learn anything new from the workshop?’ demonstrating an overwhelmingly positive increase.

Examples of skills learnt:

‘I learnt how to make music and paint.’ Child feedback

I learnt about drawing with plant ink.’ Child feedback

I learned that willow is the bendiest... and you can make trees out of it.’ Child feedback

'I learnt about the amazing colours produced by plants.' Adult participant

Sessions provided space for not just practitioners to share their skills, but participants too.

'Throughout the project we have carved out space for the core group members to share their skills with the wider Pantry users and each other. L and J in particular, have shared their skills including gardening, food production, herb harvesting/uses and jewellery making. ' TTP

Beneficiaries have learnt new skills that can be shared beyond the project, improving not only their lives but others around them.

'I can't wait to share all this with my grandson.' Adult participant from the Open Garden, having learnt to make seed bombs, bird feeders and armed with project resources such as the Sensory Guide.

Sessions have provided inspiration to learn and to share:

'I feel inspired to do more foraging, make some tea and I have learned a lot. Thank you.' Adult participant

'Well I have never done anything like this before, and I'm already learning new things! I've got lots of cooking and making skills I can share too.' Adult participant

Case studies:

The Third Person

This project has truly been extraordinary for not only our developing collaborative practice, but for the impact that we have watched develop with those who we have had the privilege of working with in Kirkley.

The basis of TTP is for us to not only collaborate with each other, but with other professionals and communities, and Wild About Kirkley has provided us with the unique opportunity to do this. We have been able to connect the facets of our practice, build connections with other disciplines as well as aligned artists, and share our skills with a new group of people. This has provided real and lasting change which we would never have been able to achieve without the opportunity to lead in this way.

This project has shown us the importance of having a prolonged presence when it comes to community engaged practice and place based themes; building trust and real local connections provides much stronger outcomes and the potential to evolve ideas in a way shorter residencies or projects just cannot attain.



Kasia Posen and Carrie Phoenix; The Third Person, standing in the gateway of the Kirkley Pantry Community Garden, under the new sign designed by participants.

Stories of change

L, Participant

L is a Pantry member with English as a second language (names within the story have been changed to maintain anonymity of participants).

I look after my son (Simon) who is visually impaired. I do cooking, chores, shopping - running our lives.

Describe any changes you've noticed since you first got involved in Wild About Kirkley.

I feel more happy and confident - I love talking with you and Kasia. You are my good girls, so I pay attention to what you have to say and share. I like doing something different to the cooking/house. It's been really good for me.

Being able to practise the language will help me to talk and share with other people. Now I understand what people are saying and it makes me feel much more confident.

What happened, do you think, to create this change?

I've done this [come to WAK] for Simon. I'm looking out for him all of the time. But there is good people here. It is safe for him and this [the project] is for me now too, I can practise regularly and enjoy the company more.

What's struck you the most about this activity / project? Is that different from what you thought before?

Yes, coming together with people with different skills has been interesting. It has been good to learn different things. They are all things I've been able to take home and use - I like that. Like all the planting things, it's very good. I didn't think that would be something I would do.

Why did you choose this particular story? (why was it significant for you?) (Louisa spoke very extensively about Simon's past, which has clipped to protect Simon's privacy should this story be shared.)

Simon is number 1 in my life. My world is keeping him safe. When he has different people to help him, like here, I can look and enjoy what he's doing.

In the past, Simon has got into a lot of trouble with drugs and the police. He took drugs before, and got in with a bad crowd. It meant that he lost his sight and that was very, very traumatic for me and him. I worry about him all the time. I worry about him getting into drugs again, he is vulnerable. I don't let him get deliveries at the door, because that is how drugs are being dealt, I try to talk to his friends to keep him protected. It is a constant worry, but he is an adult who has choices, but they affect me too you know.

When we come here, I don't worry about those things. This place has good people and I can relax and Simon is happy. Because he is taken care of, I can listen, learn and practise things.

What name or title would you give your story?

Simon



L sewing seeds in our planters, early Spring in the community garden.

K, Participant

Question 1: In 2 or 3 sentences, please tell us how you spend most of your time each day. I don't really do much. I read a bit, play some videogames, but I tend to not really talk to anyone or leave the house.

Question 2: Describe any changes you've noticed since you first got involved in Wild About Kirkley.

It has been helpful to have a reason to leave my house. I've come to realise I've never been one to initiate social interaction so having the Wild About Kirkley group meant I could do something that makes me feel less lonely without the pressure of organising it all. I feel more confident leaving the house on my own. When I first joined the group I would come with my mum or sister but now I feel able to come to group events on my own as Kasia and Carrie organised the transport for me. I've been feeling more creative and am trying to do more art independently.

Question 3: Describe 5 changes you've noticed since you first started attending the Wild About Kirkley sessions.

You may wish to relate this to ONE specific session, or to a programme (or series) of sessions.

1. Felt able to leave the house on my own.
2. Felt more creatively fulfilled.
3. Have made friends.
4. Been more independent and confident in leaving the house alone.
5. Felt more confident in advocating for myself as a chronically ill/ disabled person.

Question 4: In your view, of the 5 changes listed above, which is the most significant? (which example of a change stands out most for you?)

Being more independent and confident in leaving the house alone has been the most significant as it has been what has made it possible for me to continue to be part of the group when my mum and sister couldn't come with me.

Question 5. What happened, do you think, to create this change?

I had the safe and friendly reason to leave the house and the stress of how to get there and what we'd be doing taken off me. I've never been one to initiate going out or socialising so

having that burden taken off me meant I could focus on being well enough to participate in the group.

Question 6: What's struck you the most about this activity / project? Is that different from what you thought before?

I'm not really sure. I didn't really have any expectation or preconceptions of what the group would be like. I knew it would be a friendly and welcoming environment as my mum and sister had been part of a group run by Kasia and Carrie. I was a bit worried about disappointing people by missing meetups from being ill but everyone was so kind and were just happy to have me when I could make it. It was really nice not having to worry that my M.E. would get in the way of being a part of the community. I wasn't forgotten.

Question 7: Why did you choose this particular story? (why was it significant for you?)

I chose this story because it shows how important Wild About Kirkley has been in helping me to feel less alone and to feel able to leave the house and do something positive and creative. It has helped me to feel more creative and meant I met people I never would have if I hadn't have left my house.

Question 8: What name or title would you give your story?

I can't think of a name but I trust you to think of a good one.

Thank you very much for sharing your story.

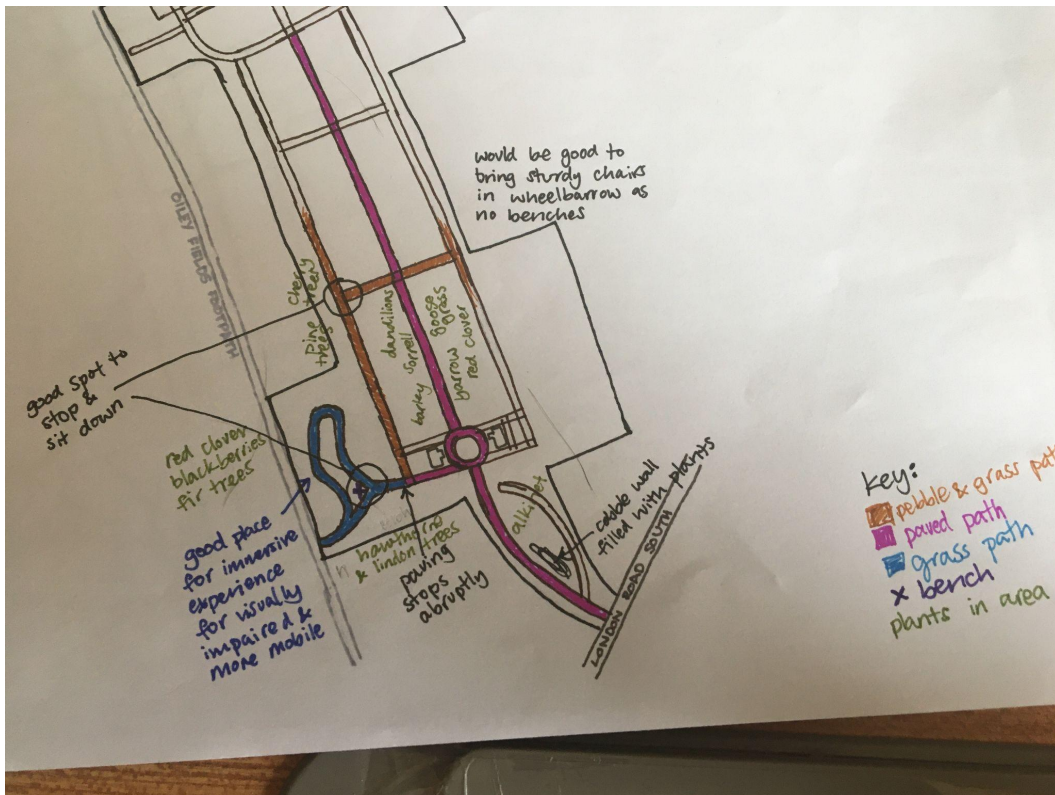
I've really enjoyed having the opportunity to meet Kasia and Carrie, and everyone else. I would have never met all of you if I hadn't had the welcoming space to do so. Thank you.



K presenting her virtual designs to the group for the new community garden, March 2022



An example of K's virtual designs for the garden, made on Sims to scale.



An example of K's design for the access focused Sensory Forage Walk that she co-designed with another Wild About Kirkley participant and Jon Tyler (forager)

Artist feedback:

I felt really welcomed into the group as an artist facilitating a short series of sessions with Wild About Kirkley. Carrie and Kasia were supportive and clear in our pre-workshop briefing meetings about what to expect, group activities previously and the types of access I'd need to consider when running the sessions, which helped with my planning. I found the atmosphere was always welcoming, inclusive and friendly. It was clear that the group facilitated some strong bonds of support between members, and that it felt like a safe space. The approach to 'creativity' seemed very strongly aligned with 'community' and 'nature-connection', which really aligned with my own values as a participatory artist. Viva Wild About Kirkley!

Genevieve Rudd.



Participants finishing up their solar dying artworks for Heritage Action Zone, lead by Genevieve Rudd.



Jon Tyler and WAK participants on one of the summer foraging expeditions around Kirkley in the lead up to First Light Festival.

Partner feedback questionnaire

Sally Connick, Literacy Trust / Get Suffolk Reading

1. How do you think the Wild About Kirkley project benefited The Pantry?

Promotion and bringing in new customers. Helping customers to feel a part of the project and 'give back'. Sense of pride in their local area and making a difference. Helping with aspiration and discovering new skills and uncovering forgotten talents. Such as the creation of beautiful poems. Benefitting from the installation of the storytelling chair.

2. How do you think the Wild About Kirkley project benefited the wider Kirkley/Lowestoft community?

By the project's, creativity, enthusiasm and commitment to the project and working alongside the local people to ensure the project was their project. Encouraged local people to have pride in their community and realise it's potential. Discovering the local wildlife and that with a little time and love beautiful things can emerge from an area they may have overlooked before.

3. How do you think Wild About Kirkley benefited our participants?

Boosting self-confidence and esteem, uncovering talents and skills. Helping them to feel an important part of their community. Providing social opportunities in a non-threatening and safe environments. Participants grew in confidence due to the gentle and nurturing nature of the project co-ordinators

4. If any, what new skills did you observe our participants learning? Gardening skills, poetry/literacy skills, interpersonal skills, confidence, time management to attend the sessions at set times.

5. Is there anything that could have been done better? Not that I am aware of.

6. What was your favourite part of the project? The energy and positivity of participants to get involved with the project, share their ideas and help shape the project. The project embracing literacy and ensuring that literacy is embedded within activity. Installation of the storytelling chair.

7. Do you see the group continuing, could you offer any support? Offering support via Get Suffolk Reading with free books, story readers and resources linked to future projects.

8. Any further comments? Thank you very much for including us in the project and enabling literacy to be embedded within the project. Helping participants to enjoy reading for pleasure and creating their own poems.

Feedback from Partners continued ...

“ It was great to work as a collaboration with Wild About Kirkley because the connection with the participants in the Kirkley local pantry garden and with our other partner Kirkley People’s Forum/Community Action Suffolk and the focus on soil in our Planet Positive zone linked really well with the festivals environmental themes, with a hyper-local focus that made it really relatable for local audiences. It was great to have the parade of lanterns come to the East Point Pavilion – creating a focus for a winter walk that was exciting and festive. It (Wild About Kirkley) made participants look at their own environment as a place that could support creative activities and be seen as somewhere interesting to live in.

It’s been great to work together – see different elements of the project link with the festival and East Point Pavilion and helped us think about our practice within the community.”

Genevieve Christie, First Light Festival



The Third Person with Professor Brian Reid at First Light Festival, Summer 2022, delivering activity in the Planet Positive area, exploring local soil samples, soil creatures and building community connections through the land.



Above : *Wild About Kirkley participants and creative team at First Light's Winter Solstice Celebration event in December 2022. Willow lanterns were made by our participants as part of our creative program. For the celebration participants paraded their lanterns from The Pantry Community Garden along the sea front to Lowestoft East Point Pavillion.*

Below : Children enjoyed the walk along the promenade with their lanterns for First Light Winter Festival.



*'I think the project was a great idea for Kirkley Pantry it brought a community together during uncertain times, new friendships were formed and a real sense of togetherness
.....it was really good bringing the direct community together around Kirkley helping to put Kirkley pantry and community garden on the map, really good engagement from our local schools with the lantern festival, and hopefully the storytelling chair will bring lots of lovely stories to our younger community members real friendships were formed, it helped with people's mental health, gave them a focus and everyone learnt new skills within the events that were held throughout the two years.
(participants learnt new skills including) gardening skills, foraging, interaction, crafting.*

The whole project has been really good, but I think my favourite parts have been to see how far the project has come from an empty space to a lovely full community garden, it's been really lovely to see how a community in itself has been formed within the friendships made at the project and how the project has given people a chance to see and learn something they wouldn't normally have had the chance to see.'

Sheryl Rumble, Morrisons Pakefield, Community Champion

Red Oak Primary School Feedback
Sharon Johnson,

1. How did Wild About Kirkley benefit your school and students?

It has given them experiences that they possibly would not have had access to otherwise. It has been wonderful for the school to open links within our community.

2. If any, what new skills did you observe your students learning?

Lots of new skills. creating with different media. Social skills, interacting with others.

3. What has been most enjoyable, working on this project?

Welcoming you into our school community and watching the children being engaged.

4. Do you see any potential for any further developments from this project?

We would love to continue working with you



Set up at Red Oak Primary October 2022 for pupils to draw foraged local plants using natural inks and self made drawing and mark-making tools.



Willow and paper lanterns created by Yr1 pupils at Red Oak Primary with the guidance of Willow Phoenix for First Light Winter parade. December 2022.

Suffolk Artlink's learning

- **Working in successful partnerships**
- **Working across different sectors of the community**
- **The benefits of a diverse group of participants across all ages**
- **Working with schools**

What worked?

Using The Third Person as the lead artists on this project has enabled us to deliver a sensitive and thoughtful approach to place based work. Their experience of working with communities and collaborating with other practitioners has been valuable in the success and fluidity of the programme.

Core participants have built real trust in their leadership, which has enabled exploration of new ideas and the development of skills they may not have had access to otherwise. Continuing to strengthen our connections through this project with other partners such as First Light and The Pantry, has also enabled this work to really embed in the Kirkley community which feels very positive and provides an ongoing legacy through venue, for the participants to connect with.

Developing connections with different demographics within Kirkley, such as school children, family carers and Pantry members, has provided the project with opportunities to bring a wide array of individuals together with positive results.

One of the project's real successes has been the uniting of diverse individuals into a group who genuinely care for each other and have built strong friendships as a result. This provides a strong foundation for the legacy of this work.

Within the core group of participants, the project has secured key individuals who are keen to continue the management of the group and community garden. We are also really pleased to be able to offer a series of light touch, monthly sessions off the back of our developed partnerships with The Literacy Trust and Suffolk Artlink's Greetings from Lowestoft project over the next 12 months, to support the key volunteers in the transition to becoming an independent group.

- **Working in successful partnerships**

The Pantry

Feedback from Rev Helen, The Pantry

How do you think the Wild About Kirkley project benefited The Pantry?

Basing the Wild About Kirkley project at the Pantry helped Pantry and its members to be connected to community beyond the food-supply aspect.

How do you think the Wild About Kirkley project benefited the wider Kirkley/Lowestoft community?

People have reported to me that having this project to engage in has helped with mental health and reducing feelings of isolation. The Pantry is part of the church and the church is

there for the community. A visible project like this helps people know that they have access to something that they might not otherwise have learned about.

Do you think Wild About Kirkley reduced isolation for our participants? If so how?

The project has proved purpose and motivation for people to get out and meet others. They come to the Pantry because they need affordable food, and the project provides an incentive to join in with something else as well.

How do you see the group continuing with your support?

That the participants are self-motivated to continue with the garden part of the project. On-going support is already being offered to help people stay motivated. The results of the work in the garden are appreciated by many.

Any further comments?

This has been a wonderful community project that has been a genesis of a greater connection with community. Thank you for choosing the Pantry as your partners in this venture.

Morrisons

It was of huge benefit to the reach and impact of the project to partner up with other organisations in the community. Our partnership with Sheryl Rumble, community champion from Morrisons, Pakefield really enriched our offer. Sheryl was able to provide donations of food and drinks for our program of workshops as well as our public open garden days. Sheryl was generous with her time and offered her support to our participants across many of our workshops. In connection with the Literacy Trust Morrisons awarded us a grant for our Storytelling Chair. This wonderful outdoor chair / bookcase enabled us to put the community garden on the map, linking our garden to 9 other Story Chair locations in and around Lowestoft. Our chair became one of the locations for author readings for the annual Story Trail.



Andy Wisler reading a story on our Story Chair in Kirkley Pantry Community Garden

Read news article via link below :

<https://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/23167169.network-storytelling-chairs-unveiled-lowestoft/>

The Literacy Trust

Working in collaboration with Sally Connick from the Literacy Trust bought a new dimension and a new way of delivering resources and learning to our participants. Sally was able to provide

What was challenging?

At a time of cost of living crisis, more and more people are needing support. This has meant that The Pantry has become increasingly over subscribed, and even though that has meant the project has been able to share work with a wider array of people, it has been challenging at times, as The Pantry is run by volunteers, which were stretched before their member numbers increased to capacity.

This sometimes has resulted in difficult communication, or lack of action - however the enthusiasm for the work has never been lost.

This meant that securing a garden volunteer took time - although the Pantry were on board with supporting this initiative, the reality was that they were already struggling to cover their workload, so supporting WAK provided extra pressure.

Once we found a dedicated volunteer though, it really helped connect the two spaces; The Community Garden and the Pantry. She became a conduit between the two and a support in its legacy.

The logistics of working in school settings has at times presented challenges too. Oftentimes this has related to agreed numbers of participants being stretched by the school. Thankfully our artists are all experienced professionals who plan for such situations, and were able to take this in their stride and still deliver engaging workshops.

Our connection with Kirkley People's Forum (KPF) felt a little stretched on this occasion, and didn't really manifest much interaction, which was disappointing. Despite numerous invites and communications offering outreach, talks and visits, we were unable to secure much response. In the early part of the project they visited the garden with enthusiasm, and booked to join various sessions, but failed to attend. We have been made aware that key individuals at the KPF have had some major personal complications to deal with, which will have had ripple effects no doubt.

(From K&C on managing the project)

We decided to take the role of project manager as well as lead artists to try and streamline the project communication and provide the project with more artist time.

While this has, on the whole, worked well and really enabled us to build trust and momentum due to the extra time on the ground, there have been challenges.

Holding space has been one of the main challenges - due to the regular nature of the sessions and the duration of our work in the area, the participants really relied on us not only to provide creative activity, but as trusted individuals with whom they sought support from.

This meant that we spent far more time than anticipated holding space for our participants at sessions; this might mean that one of us would need to sit and listen to a participant for the most part of a session, or help them solve pressing situations.

Sometimes this made it difficult to feel as though we were working as artists, although in hindsight we realised that this is part of this way of working, and cannot be separated due to the integrated, community nature of the work. The people and all they bring, are part of the work. When space can be held, wonderful things can happen, as people feel safe to share and learn in ways they cannot without that layer of connection.

How could things be improved next time?

In hindsight, focussing on designing and creating signage for the garden earlier on in the project would have helped us make connections with the immediate community more quickly, as soon as the sign was up we had people coming along to offer themselves as volunteers and donating plants and seeds etc.

Next time we could find and co-develop better ways to work with the already very stretched volunteers who work at The Pantry.

Better communications with schools about student numbers attending workshops, being clear with schools about our capacity for workshops and also being clear about room set up requirements for workshops so that things run smoothly.