



Curious Minds- Phase 2 Annual Report



"I never used to have many friends and now I do thanks to Curious Minds. I look forward to things now and feel so much better!"

(Sally, Curious Minds participant)

Curious Minds is an Arts and Heritage programme designed to support wellbeing through creative and mindful activities. Curious Minds offers participants the chance to enjoy exploring a variety of art forms whilst developing creative skills and tools to support mental wellbeing.

The themes set by the artists explore the collections from the Food Museum in Stowmarket through stories using photography, illustration, dance and mixed media.

Each programme is 12 weeks and takes place in a library or museum venue with the opportunity for all participants to exhibit their work at the end. As part of the programme, participants are further supported by a Legacy Programme hosted by Suffolk Libraries to continue their creative and wellbeing journey.

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Programme 1- Felixstowe

Artists	<i>Lead artist Gillian Allard (photography) supporting artist Lily Hammond (illustration)</i>
Supporting Team	<i>Jen Johnson (Suffolk Artlink) Rebecca Abbott (Suffolk Libraries), Katherine Bridges (Suffolk Museums)</i>
Title	<i>Back to the future</i> – an exploration of the Museum’s collections in relation to the natural world.
Course	<i>12 weeks 19th October – 18th January 10am-12.30pm</i>
Location	<i>Felixstowe Library, downstairs room</i>
Number of students	<i>10</i>

Course Content

Participants explored aspects of the collections from the Food Museum relating to fishing, gardening, walking/compasses, walking sticks, pressed flowers and beach games, as curated by Katherine Bridges, curator for the Food Museum. Participants also went on a field trip to Felixstowe Museum to further inspire their creative journeys and explore local museum collections. The overall theme explored the idea that by being near the sea and making art we are actively improving our wellbeing and celebrating our uniqueness through creativity.

Participants used iPads and photography to capture images and manipulate photographs. They also practiced illustrative techniques to further enhance their digital work. Although there was some initial reluctance to use the iPads, participants were well supported by Gillian Allard and quickly settled in to a new way of working. Several participants went on to source iPads for their personal use to continue to improve their digital skills. A final exhibition was held at Felixstowe library for 2 weeks in January 2024.



“I have never done anything like this before, it’s absolutely fantastic!” (Warren, participant)

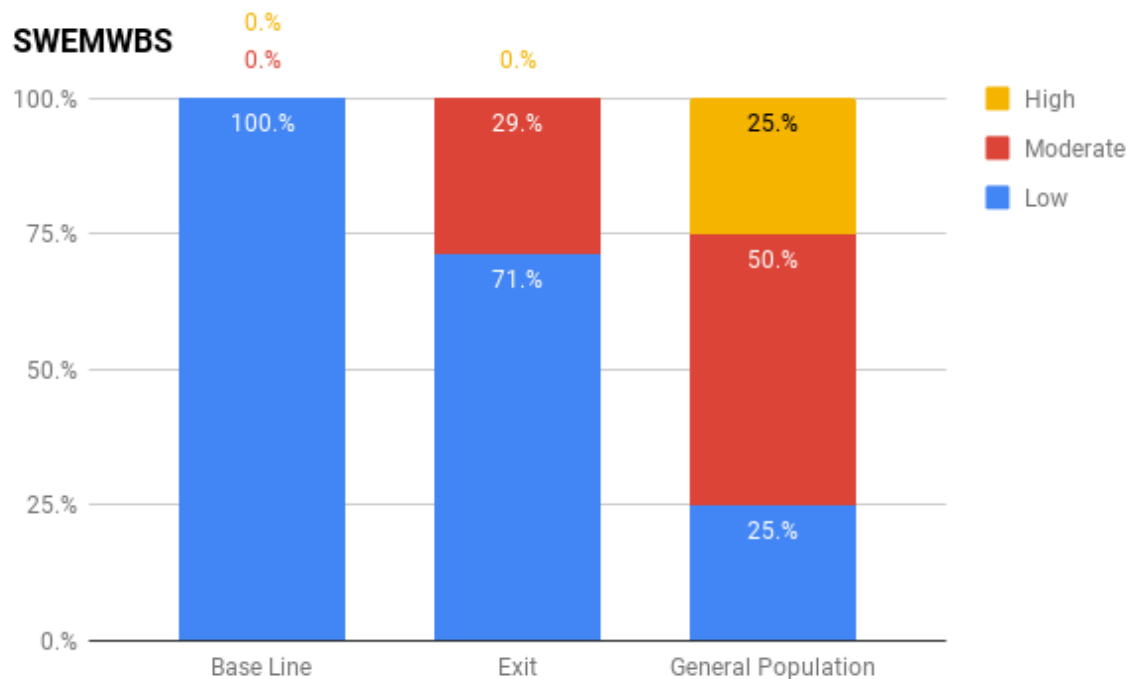


"This course gives me the dedicated space and time just for me! It has brought back my love of digital photography and helped me to engage with technology and creativity again. The course is so much more positive and reinforcing than anything I did at school. I plan to do another creative course" (Steph, participant)

"I feel marvellous now. It's unbelievable what a group like this can do. I've loved doing this course, it's been absolutely life changing for me and given me a new lease of life! I have signed up for a basic digital course here at Felixstowe library. Curious Minds has given me the courage to do this"
(Pat, participant)

Evaluation:

Course evaluation was collected using SWEMWBS, Most Significant Change case studies, weekly participant / artist reflections and PSCPs (personal support care plans).



SWEMWBS charts for Felixstowe using entry and exit values.

Qualitative data from Most Significant Change reports:

“Being creative and having consistency and routine again has been wonderful. The course has given me the one and only consistency forever! It is the only space I have to be creative and I would love to have the space to be creative at home. I know if I had the space and my own house I would be much more creative. This is now my aim.

I have always been interested in photo editing and digital art and wanted to learn how to do this. Once I started the course I loved using the iPads and decided to buy my own. It re-ignited my loved of digital photography and is something that I can do. I can relax with Curious Minds and do things that are just for me, it gives me a break from all the stress at home.” (Steph S, participant)

“I feel like my life is just beginning. I don’t think I have ever enjoyed myself as much as on this course.” (Pat, participant)

"This has been such a big change for me. It has also inspired me to get in touch with my old friends. I have now started to make plans! Before I was quite happy to stay inside and not do anything but I have now signed up for more courses. I have signed up for a networking breakfast in Felixstowe which is a really big step for me! I would never have done this before! I am now doing the Woodbridge Curious Minds course and have signed up for the next Felixstowe course too." (Sally, participant)



Artwork created by Steph for the final Felixstowe exhibition.

Programme 2- Woodbridge

Artists	Lead artist Lily Hammond (illustration), Supporting artist Michelle Brace (Digital artist)
Supporting Team	Jen Johnson (Suffolk Artlink) Rebecca Abbott (Suffolk Libraries), Katherine Bridges (Suffolk Museums)
Title	Inspiration from springtime.
Course	12 th December – 19 th March
Location	Woodbridge Library
Number of students	5 (3 repeat participants)

Course Content:

Over the 12 weeks participants worked alongside digital artist Michelle Brace to create art through digital techniques using iPads. Michelle supported participants to learn techniques in Stop Animation and photo manipulation using Pro Create Apps. Inspiration was taken from the natural world with a focus on spring. Lily Hammond supported participants to use illustrative techniques such as mono printing, mark making and painting.

Katherine Bridges curated several vintage gardening books and gardening tools from the museum collections which participants discussed and sketched.

3 of the 5 participants were repeat participants from Programme 1. All participants held a personal sketchbook and were supported to use this to explore new techniques as well as build on existing techniques that they had learnt from previous courses. Feedback from both artists explained how they were able to be flexible and build upon participants existing skills that they had learnt in Felixstowe.

“Although the programme had a structure, we could grow organically by listening to what the participants wanted to do” – artist feedback



Justin, participant, creating a mono print.

Justin had a keen interest in creative writing and the course enabled him to explore this area with the support of the artists and share weekly with other participants. Justin became self-directed in his learning and created themes and ideas to explore at home in between the weekly sessions.

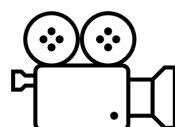
"I started writing a story titled "Curiosity and creativity inspired". For the past year I been practicing creative writing but with lack of support and experience I was struggling to get anywhere with it. I believe that with the support I'm getting from the experts at Curious Minds I can write with confidence as well as continuing my drawing and animation to keep me busy. Curious minds inspired me to get out there, try new things, make new friends and help in getting my creative writing on board." (Justin, Curious Minds participant)

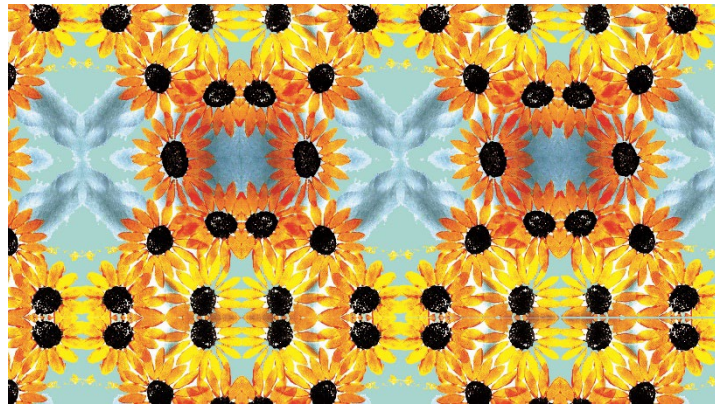


Digital artist Michelle Brace setting up an iPad ready for stop animation.

Final movie creation co-created by digital artist Michelle and participants.

[Curious Minds Woodbridge Library Video](#)





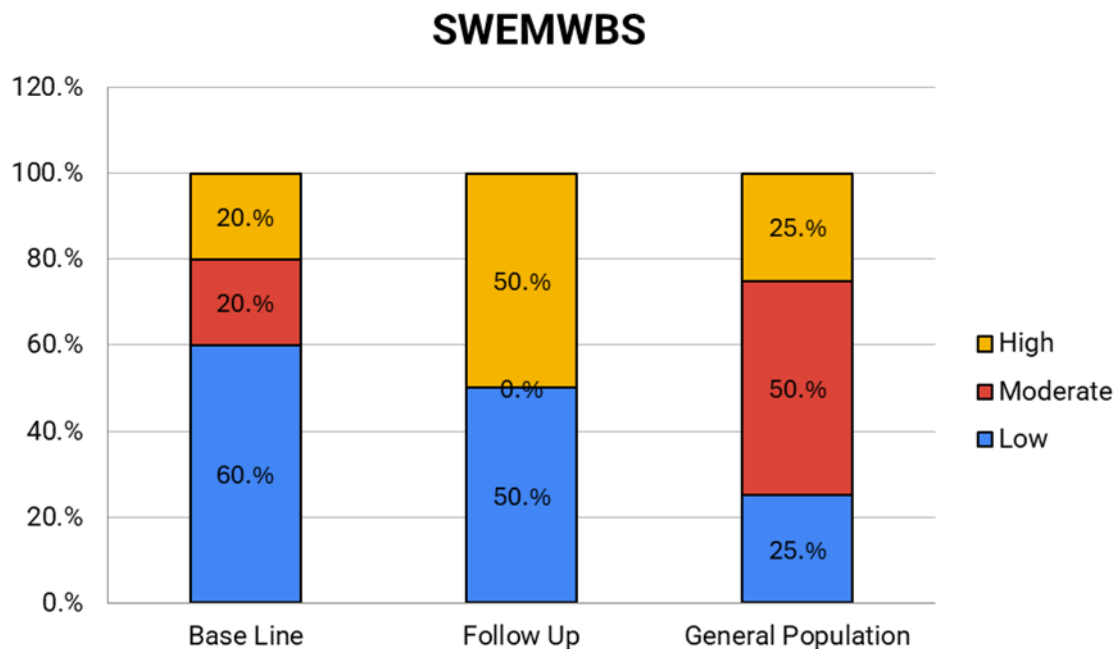
Still of digital artwork by participant Sally.



Natural inspiration for participants – artist Lily Hammond.

Evaluation:

Course evaluation was collected using SWEMWBS, Most Significant Change case studies, weekly participant / artist reflections and PSCPs (personal support care plans).



SWEMWBS charts for Felixstowe using entry and exit values.

As expected for this cohort wellbeing on entry to the programme was extremely low. Every participant who completed the programme showed an increase in wellbeing. Approximately, 30% of people completing the programme moved from wellbeing scores equivalent to the lowest quartile of the general population to that equivalent to the mid quartiles.

Whilst there was significant positive improvement in participants' well-being the cohort's well-being scores remain low compared to the general population.

Qualitative data from MSC reports:

"I feel overjoyed and delighted by attending Curious Minds. I am so enjoying the animation projects and the drawing. I have now starting drawing at home and this helps me with my mindfulness. I have started to practice techniques at home to get better at watercolours and pencils. I have used YouTube tutorials as I have so enjoyed drawing at the sessions and I want to do more in my own time. The drawing helps to stop me overthinking and helps me to relax which is so important to me.

I have been able to share my ideas with the group and I've enjoyed doing this. When I share my work with the group it really helps my confidence. I enjoy sharing my ideas with the group. My social skills are definitely improving through being at the group and I just want to continue improving my health with courses like this!" (Justin, participant)

Programme 3- Felixstowe

Artists	Michelle Brace (Lead artist), Alice Andrea Ewing (Supporting artist), guest artist Caroline Lummis Corkhill.
Supporting Team	Jen Johnson (Suffolk Artlink) Rebecca Abbott / Shauna King (Suffolk Libraries), Katherine Bridges (Suffolk Museums)
Title	Hands Can.
Course	12 weeks, 6 th March – 22 nd May, 10am-12.30pm
Location	Felixstowe Library, upstairs room.
Number of students	11 (6 repeat participants)



Course Content:

Over the 12 weeks participants worked alongside digital artist Michelle Brace to create art through digital techniques using photo manipulation and animation. The theme was based on “Hands” and local industries in Felixstowe that used hands to create and make. A key theme that evolved was the fishing industry and fishing nets. Supporting artist Alice Andrea Ewing supported participants to create SD sculptures of fish and vessels using salt dough and collage. Michelle invited a guest artist Caroline Lummis Corkhill to facilitate a net making workshop using traditional netting techniques.

Katherine Bridges curated museum items from the fishing industries and vintage photographs for the group to discuss.

6 of the 11 participants were repeat participants from Programme 1. A key feature was the use of personal sketchbooks which had proved popular on previous courses. These were used weekly and participants were encouraged to take these home and continue their creativity. Another key feature of this course was the introduction of relaxation and meditation led by Michelle at the beginning of the sessions. This was very well received by participants and feedback showed it was an integral part of the overall course.

One of the participants led an activity during the class and this led to an increase in confidence and self-esteem.

The final exhibition was held at Felixstowe library over a 2 week period



Participant, Sally, leading a creative activity at one of the sessions.



Artist Alice Andrea Ewing supporting participants Shaun and Leon.



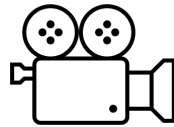
"Hands That Can" participant trying traditional net making with artist Carline Lummis Corkshill.



Work by participant Zoe.

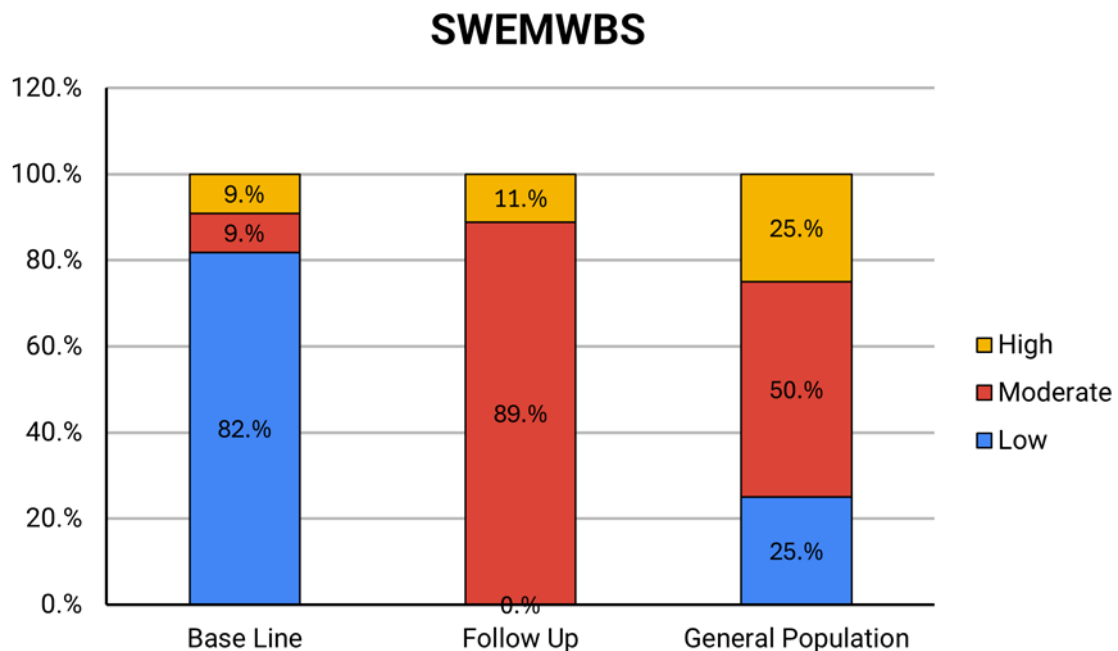


Hands Can



Evaluation:

Course evaluation was collected using SWEMWBS, Most Significant Change case studies , weekly participant / artist reflections and PSCPs (personal support care plans).



Most Significant Change Data:

MSC Helen Audio



MSC Helen
Audio.mp3

Helen - " I really enjoy doing the collage work and I am looking forward to linking it to my creative writing. It's funny that I am doing an art course as I never think of myself as arty but this course is just so different with all the things we do. This weekend I was feeling a little low and I got al my art things out and started doing some work on them, it helped me so much ! It gives me something to focus on when I am at home and stops me overthinking. Learning these new skills has transformed my life and given me so much inspiration.

"It has been awesomely life changing for me, like an unlocking deep inside, starting on a journey to express myself like I have never experienced before. I am slowly reducing my medication now as I am starting to feel so much better. I want everyone who has ever felt the same as me to have a place on a course like this" (Helen)

"Before Curious Minds I wasn't in touch with just how anxious I really was but art is helping me to explore my emotions, it's such an incredible outlet for me. Before I would have days when I felt stuck but Curious Minds has given me so much direction and purpose. I love making new things and I have learnt so many new techniques. I used to write poetry but stopped when I started to get ill, it's so amazing to be exploring words and creative writing again. I've loved making the wire sculptures and 3D vessels.

Curious Minds has given me something to look forward to each week, a focus and a weekly structure, routine. It's helping me to cope with time alone a lot better and focusing my thoughts, which can be negative, on something positive. The group is so supportive and I can really be myself when I am at the sessions." (Zoe, participant)

Programme 4 - Leiston

Artists	Alice Andrea Ewing (3D artist) and Sarah Lewis (movement artist)
Supporting Team	Jen Johnson (Suffolk Artlink) Shauna King, (Suffolk Libraries), Kiril Atanasov, (Suffolk Museums), support from Jasmine Betts (Long Shop museum)
Title	Conscious Energy
Course	May 16 th – 1 st August, 10-12.30pm.
Location	The Long Shop Museum, Leiston.
Number of students	3

Course Content:

Over the 12 weeks participants explored movement and 3D sculpture in relation to developments and infrastructures in Leiston. Themes included windmills, energy in the body and beyond, the breath and industrial machinery inspired by the Long Shop artefacts.

Sarah led relaxation and mindfulness at the beginning of the sessions and this proved to be really popular with participants requesting this also at the end of the session. Participants were initially anxious about movement, however, this was approached gently and person centred to allow participants to become comfortable and confident in movement. By the end of the 12 weeks, there was a significant increase in participants self-esteem and a keenness to move and explore different ways to express themselves through movement.

Artist Alice Andrea Ewing was flexible and adaptive to participants' interests when exploring 3D clay work and all participants found this to be therapeutic and tactile. The group made 3D steam engines and explored clay relief work and textures. The 12 weeks finished with a 2 week exhibition at The Long Shop museum and Leiston library. Exhibition work included a short movement film, 3D clay work and sketchbook work.



Participants Teresa, Samantha and Lucy exploring movement through mark making.



Movement led by Sarah Lewis with participants Lucy and Teresa.



Working in the Long Shop Museum with artist Alice Andrea Ewing, participant Lucy Chandler, Shuana King from Suffolk Libraries and John, local social prescriber.

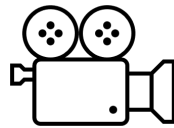


Participant Lucy creating a 3D wire sculpture of a bird.



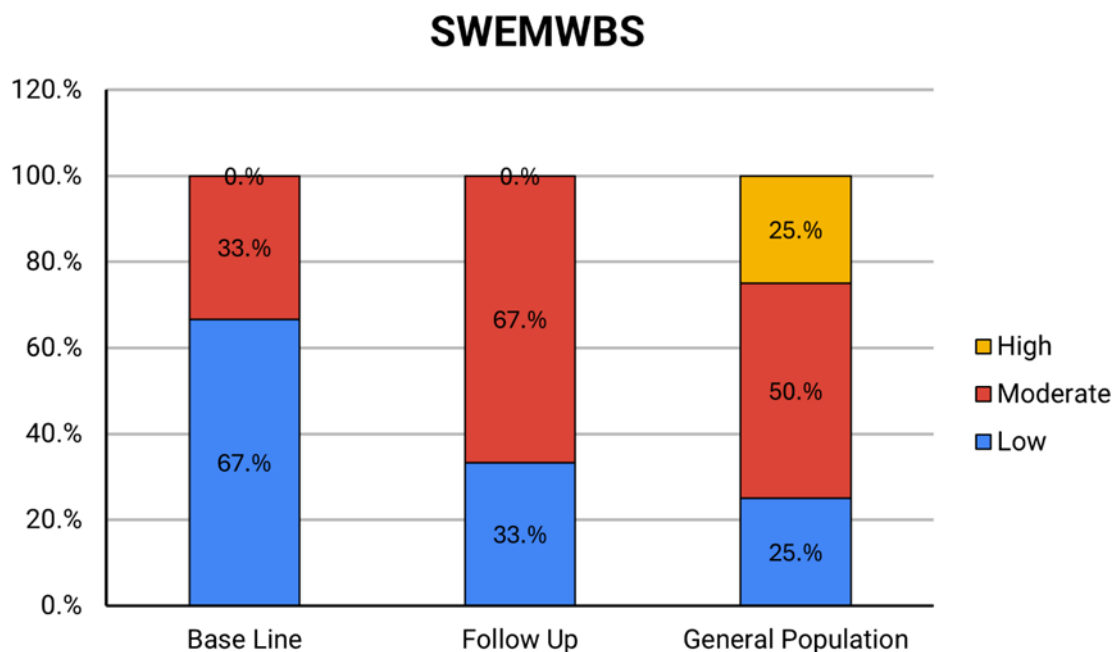
Final Exhibition day, participant Lucy with Suffolk Artlink Project Officer Jen Johnson.

[Conscious Energy - Curious Minds, Leiston Video](#)



Evaluation:

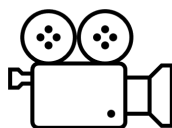
Course evaluation was collected using SWEMWBS, Most Significant Change case studies , weekly participant / artist reflections and PSCPs (personal support care plans).



Most Significant Change data:

Link to MSC audio, participant Lucy:

[Curious Minds Participant Feedback](#)



“Movement and dance is new to me, I didn’t even think about it as an art form and it was never something I really did at school. Exploring movement in this way is so refreshing and I’m really enjoying it. The pace and style of the activities is just so relaxing, almost meditative” (Lucy)

Theresa - “ I really enjoyed doing the movement activity. I feel so much more confident now than when I started this course. I’m actually really looking forward to doing movement exercises each week now”

Samantha - I have loved playing with creativity today. I have learnt new skills as I have never done anything like this before and I loved the fact that we have all been so chatty today !

"The collaboration has been excellent, having the freedom and autonomy to co-create the programmes has been wonderful." (Alice, programme artist)

"I loved how the creativity was nurtured in the group and I loved having the exhibition as an outcome for the programme" (Sarah, artist)

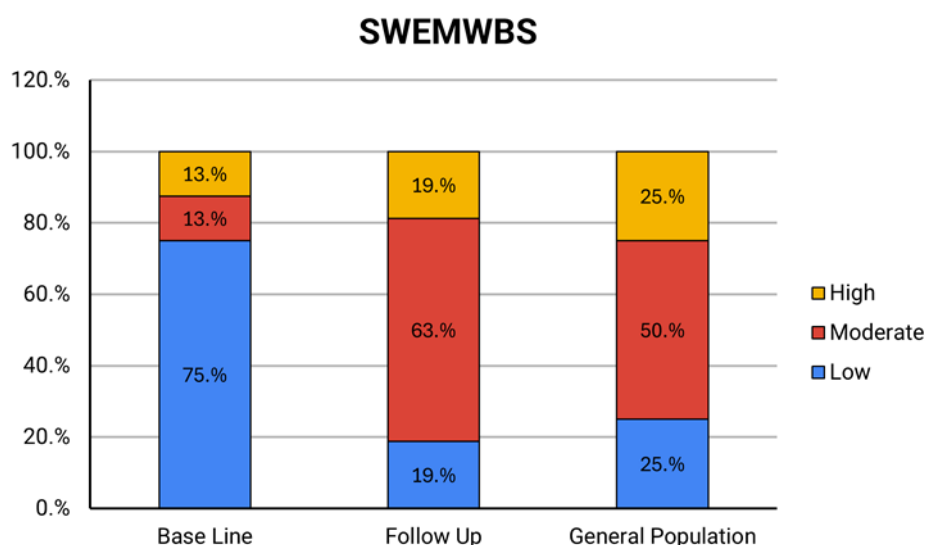
Cumulative Data from all 4 programmes:

Combining data from courses in Woodbridge, Leiston and Felixstowe our sample size was 16 unique individuals with both entry and exit values. Where people attended more than one course their first entry and final exit values are used. Although this is a small sample the difference between entry and exit values is large.

To help visualize the data we have assigned values for low, moderate and high wellbeing based on the wellbeing distribution of the general population.

The chart below shows participants' entry and exit values and, for comparison, the wellbeing distribution of the general population.

At entry participants' wellbeing is much lower than the general population with exit values being similar to the general population



As an additional way of conceptualising the impact of the programme we calculated social impact value using the method detailed in the study: Mental health and life satisfaction: the relationship between the Warwick Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale and life satisfaction a pilot study, D Fujiwara, K Keohane, V Clayton, U Hotopp.

The total social impact value for the 16 people was £74,801 with an average per person value of £4,675.

Suffolk Artlink's wellbeing evidence provides strong evidence of the positive impact of the Curious Minds programme on participants' wellbeing.

Summary:

Phase 2 has engaged over 30 participants living with complex health needs with programmes running in Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Leiston. 5 professional artists have worked across the programmes supporting creative learning in Photography, Digital Art, Sculpture, Illustration and Movement. All the programmes have taken inspiration from Suffolk Museum resources and supported participants to visit local collections. For many participants, visiting a Museum was a new and inspirational experience.

The Curious Minds programme has led to many participants developing new friendships, meeting up socially outside of the programme and accessing new creative opportunities through signposting and peer to peer support. Suffolk Libraries have developed a successful legacy programme to continue to engage and support Curious Minds participants after the 12 week programme working with peer to peer mentoring and participant led delivery models. The programme has been successful in creating a new Curious Minds creative community that fosters a sense of connection and social cohesion based on a shared lived experience.

"The course has really changed my life. I have really enjoyed it. It was the missing piece I needed in my life" (Helen, participant)

