

Suffolk Artlink's Social Impact 2025 / 2026

Suffolk Artlink uses the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) to measure the wellbeing impact of its programmes for people living with complex long term health conditions and family carers. We analysed data from a sample of 66 people attending these services in 2025 / 2026.

Our key findings & summary

- **Clear wellbeing improvement**

Average wellbeing increased by nearly 3 points, which is a meaningful change.

- **High proportion of positive outcomes**

71% improved.

- **Strong impact for low-wellbeing participants**

The biggest gains occur among those starting with the lowest wellbeing scores.

- **Substantial social value**

Estimated wellbeing value created: £195k across 66 participants

Suffolk Artlink's SWEMWBS data shows a clear positive impact on participant wellbeing. Average wellbeing scores increased from 22.1 at entry to 25.1 at exit, representing a meaningful improvement of nearly three points on the SWEMWBS scale. 71% of participants experienced improved wellbeing, while only 17% reported declines, likely reflecting external life circumstances. Using wellbeing valuation modelling, these changes equate to an estimated £194,885 in social value for the people sampled, demonstrating the significant contribution Suffolk Artlink's programmes make to wellbeing.

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What is Wellbeing?

“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.

Why does Wellbeing Matter?

Although wellbeing is distinct from mental health, low wellbeing is associated with poor personal and social function and increases the likelihood of negative outcomes for people’s mental and physical health.

Suffolk Artlink has identified that our biggest impact is where we work with people who come with very low wellbeing and we therefore target our recruitment accordingly. Our programmes have a significant positive direct impact on participants and a positive financial impact on other services such as health and social care.

Our social prescribing programme targets the people in the top 5% of primary care patients by cost. “The top 5% of patients account for around 50% of the total health care budget for primary care, secondary care and GP-prescribed drug therapy.” *Health Foundation working paper, October 2019, Working paper number: 7, "A descriptive analysis of health care use by high-cost, high-need patients in England"*, Kathryn Dreyer, Will Parry, Wikum Jayatunga, Sarah Deeny”

Dataset Overview

- Participant sample: 66
- Measure used: Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)
- Scale range: 7-35
- Comparison: Entry vs Exit wellbeing scores

SWEMWBS is widely used to measure changes in mental wellbeing following interventions, including arts, community health, and social prescribing programmes.

Average Wellbeing Change

Measure	Score
Average Entry Score	22.14
Average Exit Score	25.11
Average Change	+2.97 points

A 2-3 point increase on SWEMWBS is typically considered a meaningful improvement in wellbeing in programme evaluations.

This suggests Suffolk Artlink's activity is generating a measurable improvement in participant wellbeing.

Outcome Breakdown

Outcome	Participants	Percentage
Improved	47	71%
No change	8	12%
Declined	11	17%

Chart: Outcome Distribution



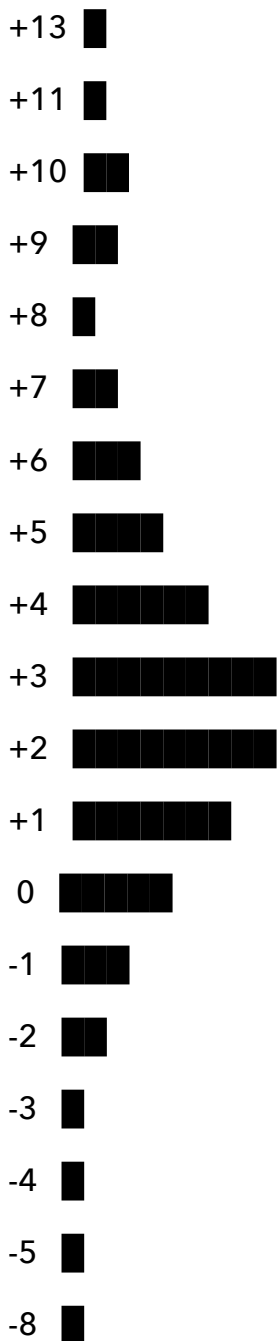
Nearly three-quarters of participants experienced improved wellbeing, which is strong evidence of programme effectiveness.

Distribution of Score Changes

Most participants improved between 1 and 6 points.

Approximate distribution:

Change in SWEMWBS score



Most improvements fall in the +2 to +5 range, which is typical for wellbeing interventions.

However, several participants experienced very large gains (8-13 points).

Starting Wellbeing Levels

Average entry score: 22.14

Typical UK population averages: 23.5 - 24.5

Participants start with slightly below-average wellbeing. Suffolk Artlink is reaching people who already have some wellbeing challenges. This strengthens the significance of the improvement.

Largest Improvements

Examples from the dataset:

Entry	Exit	Change
18	31	+13
16	29	+13
10	21	+11
13	23	+10
17	27	+10

These cases suggest the programme can produce major wellbeing improvements for some participants.

Largest Declines

Entry	Exit	Change
33	25	-8
30	25	-5
19	14	-5

These represent a small minority of participants and likely reflect external life circumstances rather than programme impact. This accords with participants' responses when asked about their circumstances by our project team.

Social Value

The calculation for social value is based on the model detailed in the paper, Mental Health and Life Satisfaction: The Relationship between the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and Life Satisfaction, Daniel Fujiwara, Kieran Keohane, Vicky Clayton, Ulrike Hotopp, published by HACT, 15 September 2017.

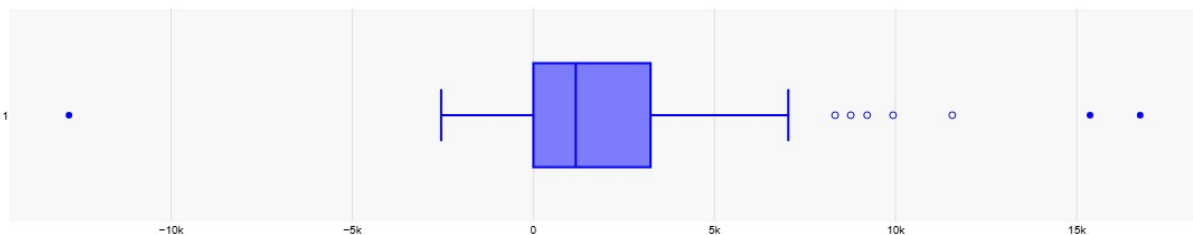
From the monetised values you provided:

Measure	Value
Total social value generated	£194,885
Average value per participant	£2,953

This indicates substantial wellbeing value created through Suffolk Artlink's programmes.

Our largest values occur where participants move from very low wellbeing into moderate wellbeing.

Boxplot, Social Value Distribution



Skewness Shape: Asymmetrical, right/positive (pval=0.007) (right-skewed)

Excess kurtosis: 4.3288 (the mean is pulled higher than the median by the large values to the right)

Tails Shape: Leptokurtic, long heavy tails (pval=0) (this is statistically significant and not random)

Key findings

- Clear wellbeing improvement

Average wellbeing increased by nearly 3 points, which is a meaningful change.

- High proportion of positive outcomes

71% improved.

- Strong impact for low-wellbeing participants

The biggest gains occur among those starting with the lowest wellbeing scores.

- Substantial social value

Estimated wellbeing value created: £195k across 66 participants

Case Study

Before joining our *Curious Minds* programme, one participant was experiencing severe anxiety and frequent panic attacks, alongside the long-term impact of a very difficult childhood. At their lowest point, they had made multiple attempts on their life, including one in 2023. They described feeling unheard and dismissed: *"I felt my feelings were never taken seriously... like my emotions and thoughts meant nothing to people."*

Their days often felt overwhelming and directionless. Although they were not fully aware of the extent of their anxiety at the time, they frequently felt stuck, unable to process or express what they were going through.

Through our social prescribing initiative, they began attending regular creative sessions as part of *Curious Minds*. These sessions quickly became a vital anchor in their week, offering structure, purpose, and a safe, supportive environment.

Art became a powerful outlet for emotional exploration. Through activities such as mark-making, collage, wire sculpture, and 3D vessels, they discovered new ways to process and express complex feelings. They also reconnected with a past passion for poetry and creative writing—something they had stopped during periods of ill health.

The impact has been transformative:

Emotional Resilience: They have developed healthier coping strategies, using art as a tool to manage anxiety and navigate difficult emotions. Panic attacks have reduced in frequency, and they are better able to "ride the waves" of their feelings.

Renewed Purpose and Routine: Weekly sessions provide structure and something to look forward to, helping them manage time alone and redirect negative thoughts into positive creative focus.

Confidence and Self-Expression: Initially quiet and hesitant, they have grown in confidence, learning to embrace creativity without fear of judgment: *"I've learnt now that it doesn't matter... I can just explore my creativity and be myself."*

Social Connection: They have formed meaningful friendships within the group and feel a strong sense of belonging: *"The group is so supportive and I can really be myself."*

Reflecting on their journey, they describe the most significant change as learning to explore and understand their emotions through art:

"Using art to help me think about the way I feel... it's like a brand new coping technique that I've learnt."

Now, they speak with optimism and enthusiasm about their progress and creative journey:

"Curious Minds has given me something to look forward to each week... I've loved all of it, it's been absolutely amazing!"

Theory of Change

