

# Evaluation Report: The Foundling Museum and Home- Start Camden and Islington Parental Wellbeing Project - Spring/Summer 2025

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Participant artwork

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview and Executive Summary

This report represents the evaluation of the Foundling Museum and Home-Start Camden and Islington's Creative Project for Mothers, Spring/Summer 2025. It is the fourth round of the programme. For the first time, the programme was delivered primarily off site, at 1A Children's Centre in Camden, between April and July 2025. The programme was delivered largely off site because this opened up the possibility for providing a crèche for young children, allowing mothers more undisturbed creative time.

The evaluation has consisted of an ongoing process of planning, delivery and reflection, with the evaluator attending the ninth (of ten) sessions, and conducting a series of 1-2-1 and small group reflective conversations with participants. They also ran an online-reflective session attended by the Arts & Wellbeing Manager at the Foundling Museum, the artist/facilitator, the Crèche Co-ordinator at Camden Council and the Community Project Manager at Home-Start. The 1A Children's Centre Manager was unable to attend the session, but the questions were sent to her by email in advance of the session, and her responses have fed into the body of the report.

Art of Regeneration has been working with the Foundling Museum since February 2022, evaluating a number of Arts and Wellbeing projects. Whilst each project is distinct, the overall approach has been similar and this report draws on points of learning that emerged from previous evaluation processes.



Participants creating artworks

## 1.2. Programme Aims

The aims of the project are sub-divided into aims for the Foundling Museum and aims for Participant Engagement. The aims for the Foundling Museum have largely remained consistent across the four iterations of the project, and have only been updated to reflect the diversifying mix of partners that the project now works with. The aims for participant engagement have developed over the course of the programme to be more aligned with the Five Ways to Wellbeing approach (first developed by the New Economics Foundation) - Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, and Give. An additional two aims are included.

## Aims for the Foundling Museum

- To develop a strong partnership with Home-Start Camden & Islington, 1A Children's Centre and Camden Council's crèche provision that will enable future work
- To develop a robust working model and understanding of the work
- To create a strong case for further work through:
  - understanding how engagement with the collection and historical narrative can support parental wellbeing and mental health
  - to explore how a parental wellbeing perspective sheds new light on the Museum's collection and work
  - to understand the impact for parents and their children
- To develop a new local audience that feel confident in accessing the Foundling Museum
- To open up peer support networks and increase ongoing opportunities.

## Aims for Participant Engagement

- Connect with other people (e.g. to feel part of the group and comfortable, less isolated)
- Learn an artistic skill / learn something new (To engage in meaningful activity: e.g. to develop a new skill; to discover a talent; to be proud of something they've made; to recognise creative ability in themselves; to be more able to take creative risks.)
- Be curious, notice new things
- Give something of themselves to the project
- Being active: coming to the Museum is being active, getting themselves out of the house

And:

- To connect with the Museum: e.g. to feel comfortable in the Museum, recognising it as a place for them; to find resonance with the Museum's story and connection with their own stories – space to voice these
- Enjoyment

It is a further aim that these outcomes may lead to:

- Reduced feelings of anxiety, stress and low-mood/depression
- Reduced social isolation
- Increased mental health and wellbeing

## 1.3. Methodology

The aims listed above - for the Foundling Museum and for the participants - provide the basis for assessing the achievements and success of the programme.

Art of Regeneration uses an iterative approach to evaluation, based on a cycle of planning, reflecting and implementing. It is a collaborative undertaking that involves the evaluator and the delivery team actively reflecting on the progress and processes involved in planning and delivering the programme, with regular feedback and updates. It also considers reflections

from the participants through informal conversations between the evaluator and participants, and the weekly session logs provided by the Arts & Wellbeing Manager, which are based on reflective debriefs between the delivery team and volunteers following each session.

We used a mixed methods approach, the first aspect of which considered the quantitative data gathered throughout the process: In the past we have designed and used wellbeing surveys for participants, based on the five ways to wellbeing, but with Arts Council England's introduction of Insight and Impact (I&I) evaluation surveys, alongside the usual demographic surveying, we decided not to overwhelm participants, and made use of the data from the I&I surveys for our purposes.

A process of responsive iteration also saw the facilitators move from the post-it note check-in and check-out approach that they have used previously, to a collaborative poetry writing process at the start that the artist/facilitator called 'Vibrations', and a similar process at the end called 'Today I...'. These poems provide a similar 'temperature check' at the start and the end of the sessions. Repeating the same process each week also gave mothers a sense of ritual and familiarity, and gave each person in the group the (optional) opportunity to speak, share, listen and connect.

The second aspect of the evaluation was a qualitative, 'action research' based process which responded to the programme and provided ongoing opportunities for reflection and learning over the course of the delivery phase and beyond.

#### **The methods and data we have drawn on include:**

- Culture Counts Insight and Impact evaluation data
- Collaborative session start and end poems - 'Vibrations' and 'Today I...'
- Facilitated participant feedback conversations held in the ninth session
- Weekly session logs, including notes from the debrief held after each session
- Demographic data of participants, staff and volunteers
- Attendance and demographic data provided by the Foundling Museum.
- Field notes and observations from evaluator visit
- Regular check-ins between the Arts & Wellbeing Manager and the evaluator
- Reflective online sessions with the Arts & Wellbeing Manager at the Foundling Museum, the artist/facilitator, the Crèche Co-ordinator at Camden Council and the Community Project Manager at Home-Start
- Programme information
- Previous evaluation reports carried out for other strands of the Arts & Wellbeing Programme (Foundling Museum and Camden Mind Social Prescribing Programme 2022)
- Contextual and organisational information, including from the Foundling Museum and Home-Start Camden and Islington websites

The above constitutes a rich and varied set of data that has been invaluable to the evaluation process.

## 1.4 Summary of Key Findings

### For the group:

- **Demographics:** The group of mothers that attended the sessions were diverse in terms of ethnicity and neuro-diversity. Their age range spanned the 20s to the 40s.
- **Attendance:** The programme was well attended. Of the ten mothers that attended a session, six formed the core group by attending at least five sessions
- **Stand-out feedback:** The mothers especially valued the opportunity:
  - To connect with others - *What helps most is speaking my heart. It just happens here because we're doing art and thinking about families*
  - To have time away from mothering responsibilities - *I was so nervous to come, I thought I couldn't do it, but I'm so glad I did. Some time is better than no time. So much better to be here than at home.*
  - To be creative - *I made clay boobs because I'd struggled with breastfeeding*
  - To have support with their children - *I really like the crèche workers. [I told them about my autism and ADHD. The worker taught me loads about looking after [my baby]*
  - *It was by far the best creative workshop series that I have had the privilege to be a part of. Both Heather and Nicole were exceptional in their delivery of the series. As a Toddler-Mum who struggles with severe mental health issues, it became the highlight of my week. It was the only 2 hours that I felt fully appreciated for who I am, for the skills I have and for what I can offer, outside of parental duties. I am only sad that it has come to an end.*
  - All respondents to the online survey agreed or strongly agreed that the project had had a positive impact on mental wellbeing, had sparked curiosity, had helped improve artistic skills, had helped them feel connected to people in the community, and had made them feel welcome and included.

### For project design:

- The provision of a crèche proved invaluable, and outweighed concerns regarding shifting the sessions off-site. The team needs to continue fostering connections to the Foundling Museum story through the first and last sessions on-site, as well as in the activities at 1A Children's Centre to ensure that parents continue to feel connected to the Museum as part of the programme.
- Strong partnership working: "generous;" leading to positive outcomes for the families and increased peer learning across sectors. Shared resources to achieve greater outcomes for families.
- Displaying the work a positive addition to the project
- Using creative writing was valued by participants and provided reflective space at the start and the end of the sessions

### Key recommendations:

- Continue with crèche and maintain strong communication to maintain partnership, brokering further conversation with other organisations at 1A that share spaces.
- Maintain strong safeguarding approach
- Maintain flexibility in planning, responding to the group

## 2. The Programme

### 2.1. Overview

Ahead of the programme beginning, the Arts and Wellbeing Manager shared a description of the project with the evaluator, a section of which we have included below:

*The Foundling Museum & Home-Start Creative Project is a partnership to support families experiencing disadvantage, particularly mothers, coping with difficulties such as mental ill health and social isolation. Throughout the ten-week project, participants work with a professional artist, exploring themes of identity and parenthood through creative activities and community connections. The history of the Foundling Hospital, and its stories of maternity, love and loss provide creative inspiration and a connection between past and present.*

*Each week, participants will use a range of creative media to develop their artistic skill and expression, and to discover their own feelings and experiences in a new light.*

The programme ran for ten weeks from 22nd April - 1st July 2025. There was a one week break in the middle for half term. The first and the last sessions were held at the Foundling Museum, with the remainder being held at 1A Children's Centre in Camden. Parents<sup>1</sup> and children were together as a group in the first, second and tenth sessions. A crèche was provided in a separate room at the children's centre for sessions three - nine. Session nine concluded with the parents going upstairs to the crèche to join their children and receive the 'All about me' booklets that the crèche staff had prepared for the children over the course of their time there.

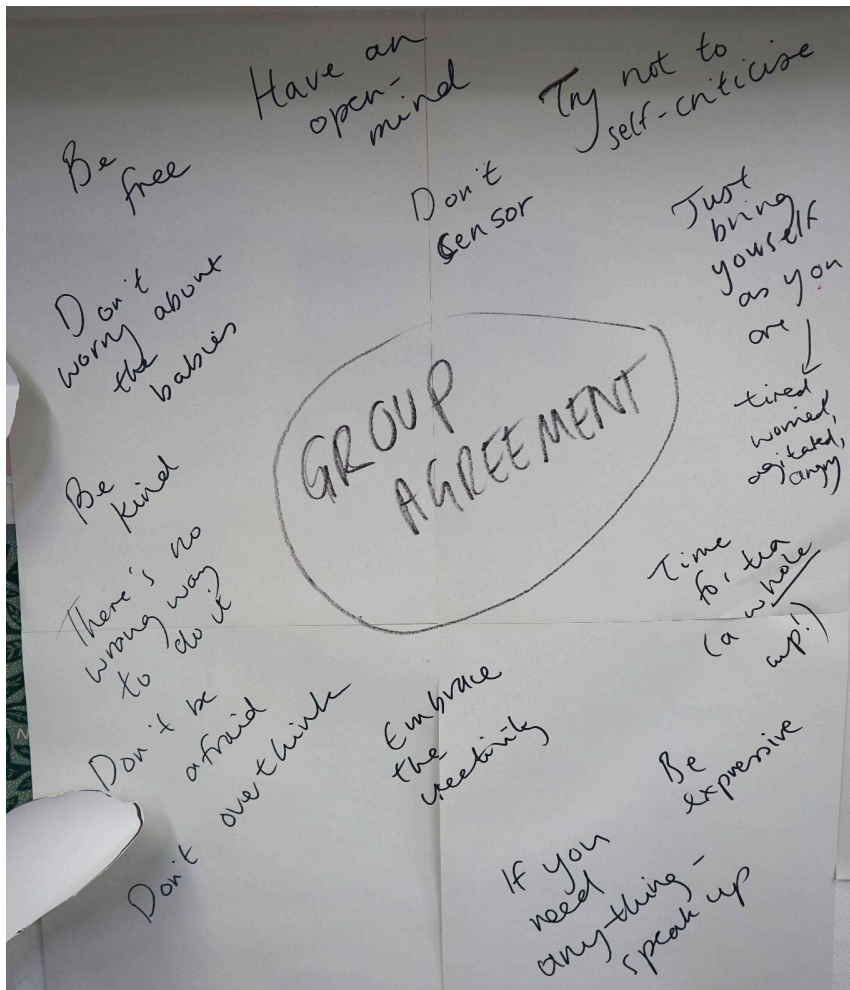
The sessions were facilitated by artist Nicole Morris, who has worked with the Foundling Museum's Art and Wellbeing Programme previously, but was facilitating the Home-Start creative project for the first time. Heather Kay, the Arts & Wellbeing Manager at the Foundling Museum was also present at all sessions and played a crucial role in supporting the facilitation of the sessions, overseeing the logistics of the programme and being the primary point of contact for all parties - partners and participants. The sessions were also supported by two Home-Start volunteers. Both volunteers had previously been participants on the course, and having experienced an increase in confidence, felt able to move into more formal roles to support other mothers to participate in the sessions.

Childcare has been an ongoing area of action research for the programme, and this was the first round that was able to provide a crèche for young children (under fives). This provision allowed mothers a valuable breather from their caring responsibilities, and a chance to reconnect with themselves and others. This is explored more below (3.4).

In session three the participants co-created a group manifesto that served to guide their approach throughout the project.

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<sup>1</sup> While the programme is open to all parents, every iteration has been attended exclusively by mothers (and their children). We have explored the value the programme has to the whole family - including fathers where they are involved in childcare - in previous evaluation reports (see, for example, Evaluation Report: The Foundling Museum and Home-Start Camden and Islington Creative Project (Autumn/Winter 23) Polly Rodgers and Imogen Slater - February 2024)



Participants' group manifesto

Though the focus of the sessions was primarily visual arts, creative writing formed a much more central part of the programme than it had in previous rounds. The following text was shared with Home-Start in advance of the sessions starting:

*Working with artist Nicole Morris, we will be using textiles and creative writing to explore themes of motherhood, memory-making and transformation. Becoming a mother is a time of change and metamorphosis: bodies change in pregnancy, through the process of caring for young children and in meeting their needs. This can have an impact on our identities – how do we change as we become mothers? Are we still the same people as before?*

*These questions will be explored through meeting together with other mothers, sharing our experiences and taking part in creative activities, such as tie-dyeing, mending, embroidering and using batik to create our own fabric works to take home.*

## 2.2. Session Structure

Sessions one and ten were held at the Foundling Museum, with children present. The first session provided an introduction to the project and the opportunity for parents and children to get to know the artist and Arts & Wellbeing Manager, as well as acquainting themselves with the broad approach.

Sessions two - nine were held at 1A Children's Centre. Children and parents were together in the crèche for session two, giving parents the opportunity to introduce their children to the space, to the crèche staff and to explore some creative activity together. The crèche was in place for sessions three - nine, and for the adult participants, those sessions followed a routine:

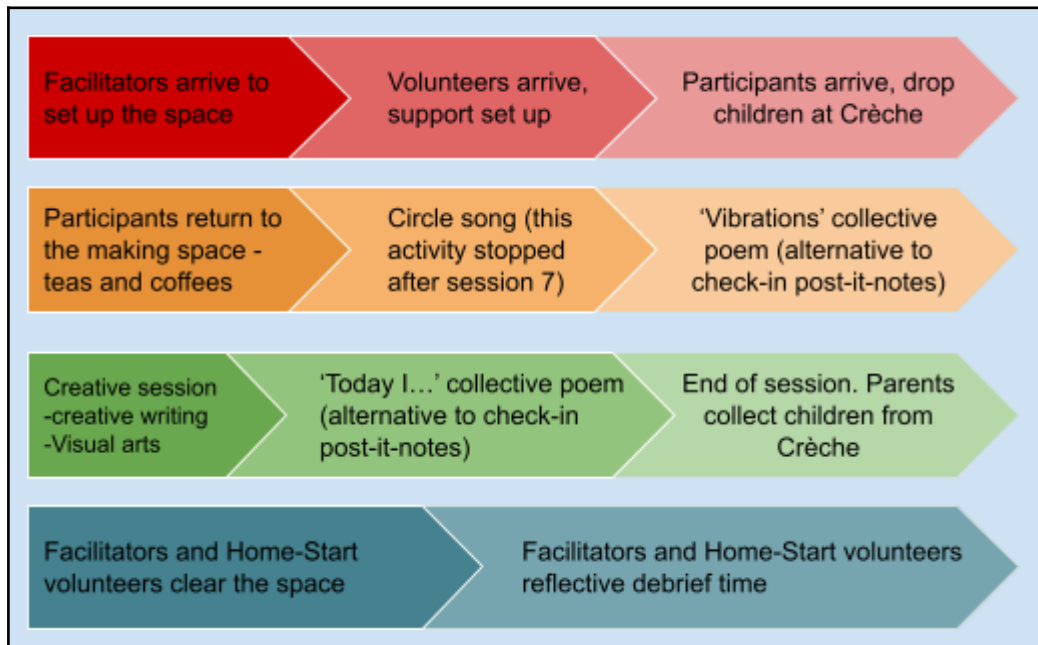


Fig 1. Session structure

### 2.3. Attendance Data

The project was open to 10-12 parents and their children under 5; approximately 20 participants in total. Although the sessions were open to all parents, in practice only mothers attended the art sessions. Between them, they brought 10 children between the ages of four months and two years.

Overall, 14 mothers signed up for the programme. Of those 14, four mothers were ultimately unable to attend any sessions, one mother only attended one session, two attended three sessions, and one attended four sessions. Of the ten mothers that attended a session, six formed the core group by attending at least five sessions. As the table below demonstrates (fig 3) five of the six core group attended between 7 and 10 sessions. The primary reasons for not attending individual sessions were child sickness or hospital appointments. One mother and her autistic child signed up but were ultimately unable to attend because of complications with the child's care. The mother who only attended one session, and one of the mothers who attended three sessions stopped coming due to family bereavements. One mother missed two sessions because she has family in Iran and was upset by the news of bombing there and one because of illness. One mother missed a session because she was on holiday. There were several instances where mothers communicated their intent to come, but didn't make it. We put this down to the normal complications of having small children, alongside the potentially exacerbating influence of parents struggling with mental health.

Session Number	Number of Mothers	Number of Children	Number of staff/volunteers in the session	Number of crèche staff
1	5	5	4	0 (no crèche provided)
2	9	8	4	3
3	6	5	3	3
4	9	7	4	3
5	5	2	4	3
6	4	2	4	3
7	5	5	4	3
8	4	4	3	3
9	5	5	5	3
10	5	5	4	0 (no crèche provided)
Average <sup>2</sup>	6	5	4	3

Fig 2. Attendance data

Number of Sessions Attended	Participants
1-2	1
3-4	3
5-6	1
7-8	3
9-10	2

Fig 3. Number of sessions attended

<sup>2</sup> Rounded to the nearest whole number

## 2.4. Demographic Data

Demographic data was collected via Arts Council England's Illuminate tool. Due to participant absences on the days the staff planned to share the Illuminate survey, ultimately only six participants completed the survey. These six participants ranged in age from the bracket [25-29] to [40-44]. The group were ethnically diverse, with two identifying as Asian/Asian British, one identifying as Black/Black British, two identifying as 'Any other ethnic group or none of the above', and one identifying as 'Mixed/multiple ethnic group'.

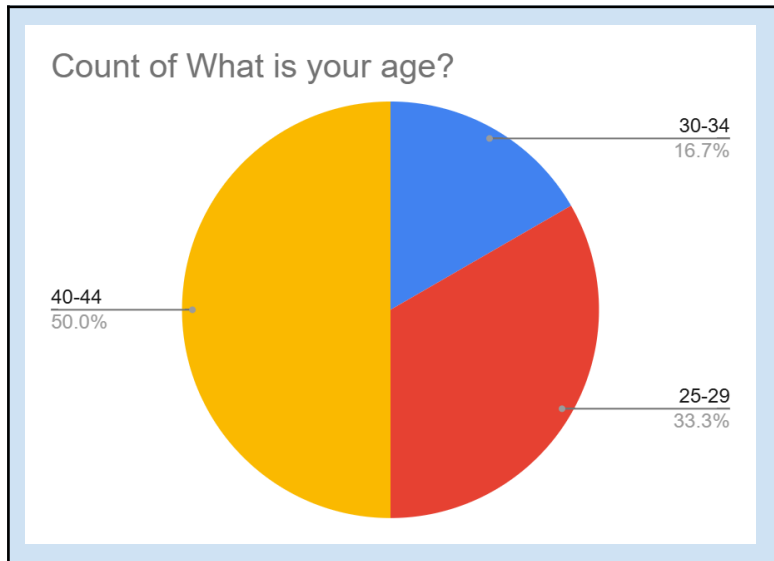


Fig 4. Count of participants' age

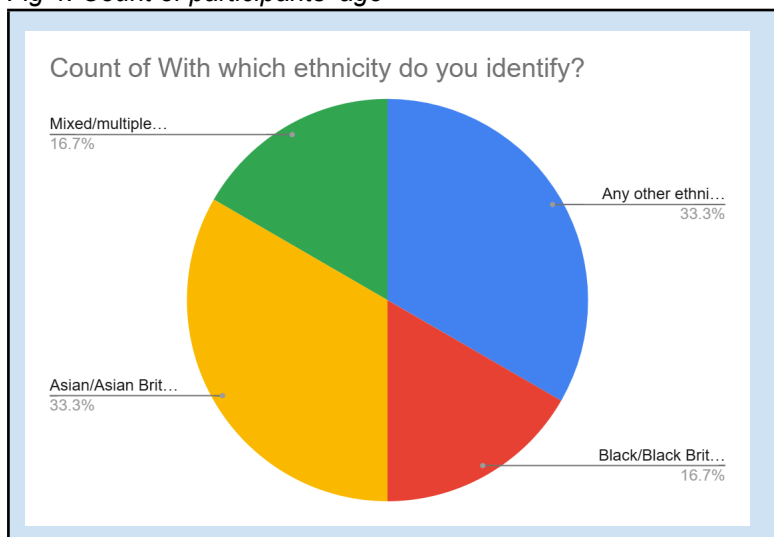


Fig 5. Count of participants' ethnicity

- Four of the six respondents told us that they identified as 'D/deaf, and/or do have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses expected to last for 12 months or more?'
- Three of the six respondents told us that they identified as neurodivergent (neurodivergence could include Dyslexia, ADHD etc.)

- Of the six respondents, one chose not to disclose her occupation beyond ticking the option 'None of the Above / Not known / Not applicable'. Three described their work as childcare ('full time mum', 'carer for disabled child', 'self employed actor before having two children'), one told us she was 'not working' (though of course she also has caring responsibilities), and one told us she was a Copywriter/Content Creator
- All six participants identified as female, and told us that their gender identity aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth
- Five of the six participants identified as straight, one identified as gay.

## 2.5. Attendance Across Programmes

Between the Pilot of the Foundling Museum and Home-Start Creative Project partnership, which ran between February and April 2023, and this most recent iteration, a number of participants have attended multiple programmes, and in some cases they have developed from participants to taking on a volunteer role. The table below shows participants who have attended the programme more than once. A pink cell indicates the mother attending the programme as a volunteer instead of a participant. A number of parents have also been attending family workshops at the Museum, some very regularly and others on a more ad hoc basis. These take place every school holiday.

Mother	Feb 2023	Sept 2023	April 2024	April 2025	Comments
A	x	x			
B	x	x	x	x	Attended the programme twice as a participant and twice as a volunteer
C		x		x	Attended the programme once as a participant and once as a volunteer
D		x	x	x	
E			x	x	
F			x	x	
G			x	x	

Fig 6. Count of repeat attendance

Parents who had attended previous projects had expectations that this iteration would be similar but there were significant changes this time. Nicole Morris was a new artist for the programme, and the project being predominantly off site was a big shift. Although they understood why this was, one of the volunteers still expressed that she strongly preferred for the sessions to take place at the Museum, and told us that she missed the space. A few parents articulated that they were used to the previous artist's approach and that it took a while to transition to a different invitation from Nicole. Additionally, the previous two projects had been facilitated by the Arts & Wellbeing Manager Maternity Cover, so many were meeting the Arts & Wellbeing Manager for the first time, as well as there being a new

Home-Start Community Projects Manager. The Home-Start Community Projects Manager's first day in the new role was on the first session of the project, so the project formed part of her introduction to the families. This needed careful management by the facilitation team, recognising these changes with the group and the need for clear communication to support parents to transition.

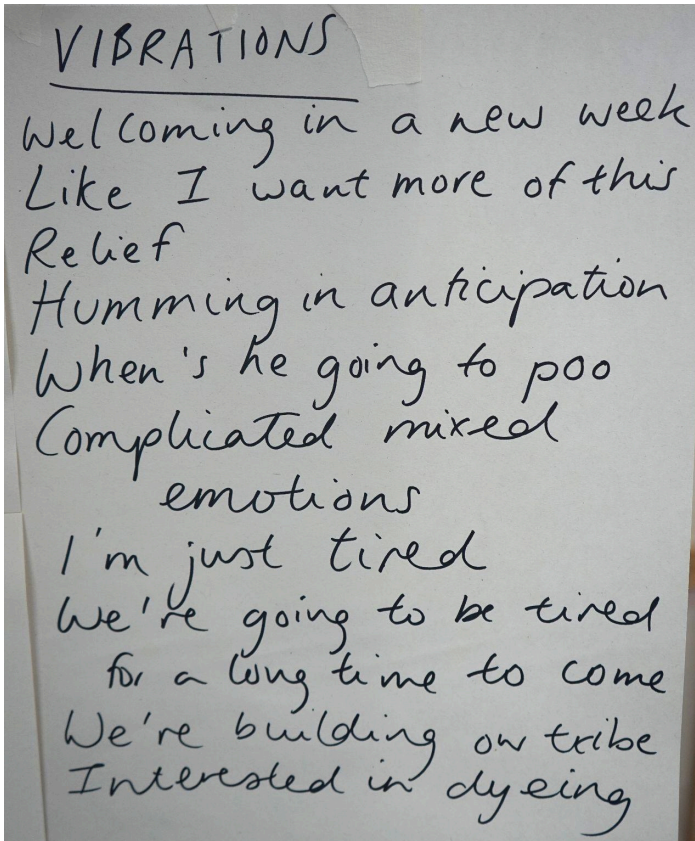
The consistent person in the room was one of the Home-Start Volunteers, who is the only person who has attended all projects since the start of the partnership. She therefore had existing relationships with a number of the other mothers and alongside the other Home-Start Volunteer was key to group cohesion. As discussed in previous Mind project evaluations, a core group of people who have an existing relationship with the Museum can be supportive and grounding for ongoing group development. This continued to be the case in this project, with parents who knew each other being inclusive and welcoming of new participants.

A key aim of the programme is relationship and community-building. With the programme now running for several years, there are now multiple cohorts of parents with connections being made spanning different groups. The longer it runs, the more possibility for these ongoing peer support networks to develop and long-term relationships to grow. The repeat attendance and longer-term relationships built with the Museum point to the success of the project and the benefits of longer-term working, increasing the benefits of the programme year-on-year.

This progression route - of parents becoming volunteers for Home-Start after having received support - is firmly part of Home-Start's ethos and values. In the case of volunteering specifically for this programme, creative confidence has been key to parents taking on the role of volunteer. Both volunteers had strongly re-connected with their creative skill through the creative projects they had attended, with this connection being an important part of their sense of self and identity. Alongside other positive impacts and relationship-building, this seems to be a key factor in this longstanding relationship. One of the volunteers was pregnant for this iteration of the project, and is looking to re-join for the next programme, potentially as a participant.

## 2.6. Wellbeing Data

Participant wellbeing was a key consideration of the programme, and was tracked in a number of different ways. The 'Vibrations' and 'Today I...' poems that the participants wrote and shared at the start and end of each session replaced the check-in and check-out post-it notes that we have used in previous iterations. While it is harder to use this method to demonstrate clearly the wellbeing impact that the sessions had, these pieces of writing provided insightful collective snapshots of the general mood at the start and end of each session. We explore this approach in more depth below (3.5).



Vibrations poem - each line was spoken by a different participant

We also asked six participants to complete an Impact and Insights survey<sup>3</sup>, which asked them to rate their experience against a number of dimensions (standardised statements used to measure specific outcomes), as well as respond to a number of questions. By rating their level of agreement with these statements, participants provide quantifiable data on the impact of the work. A large bank of pre-designed questions are provided by Culture Counts, and the Arts & Wellbeing Manager selected questions that aligned most closely with the Ways to Wellbeing Approach the evaluation has been using as a measure. We have listed the dimension statements below (fig 7). The charts below shows participants' rating of the programme against the 6 dimensions (fig 8), and their rating of benefits experienced (fig 9):

It had a positive impact on my mental wellbeing	It sparked my curiosity and made me want to find out more	It helped improve my artistic skills	It helped me gain new insight or knowledge	It helped me to feel connected to people in the community	It made me feel welcome and included
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Fig 7 - Impact and Insight Dimension Statements

<sup>3</sup> Designed by Culture Counts for Arts Council England, and part of NPO mandatory reporting to ACE

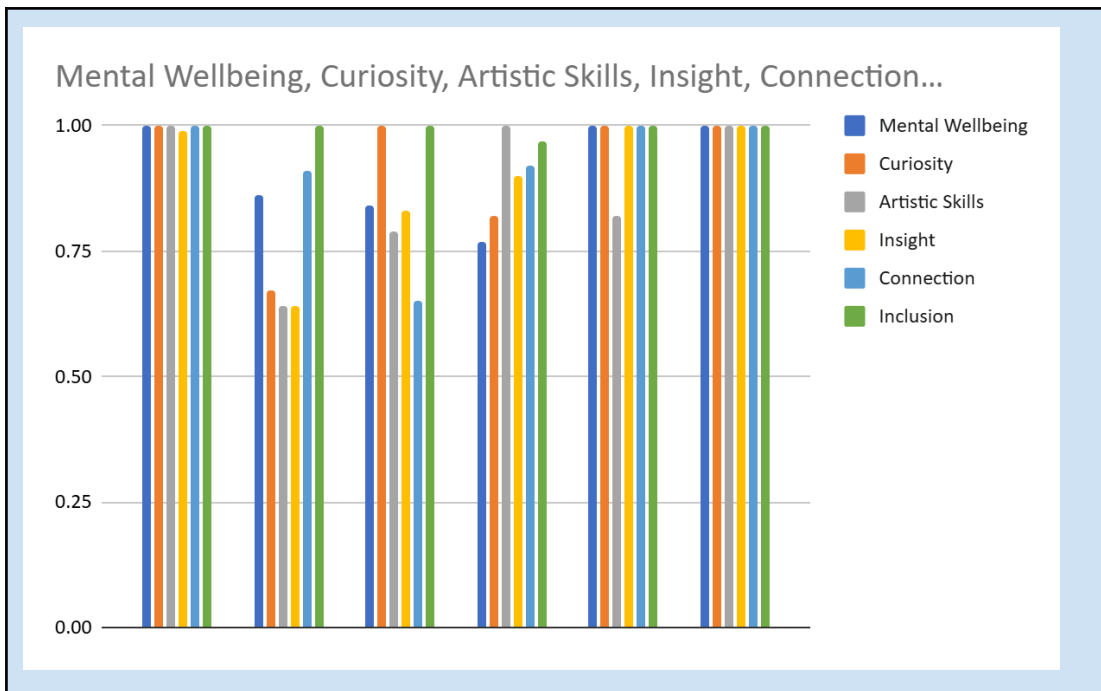


Fig 8. Participant rating against Insight and Impact dimensions

- All dimensions were scored highly by respondents. Where 1 = 'Strongly agree', and 0 = 'Strongly disagree', respondents gave all dimensions an average of 0.9 or 1 (when rounded to the nearest decimal place)
- Inclusion achieved the highest overall average
- Artistic skill achieved the lowest, though rounded to the nearest decimal place, this dimension still achieved an average of 0.9, which is an exceptionally high score

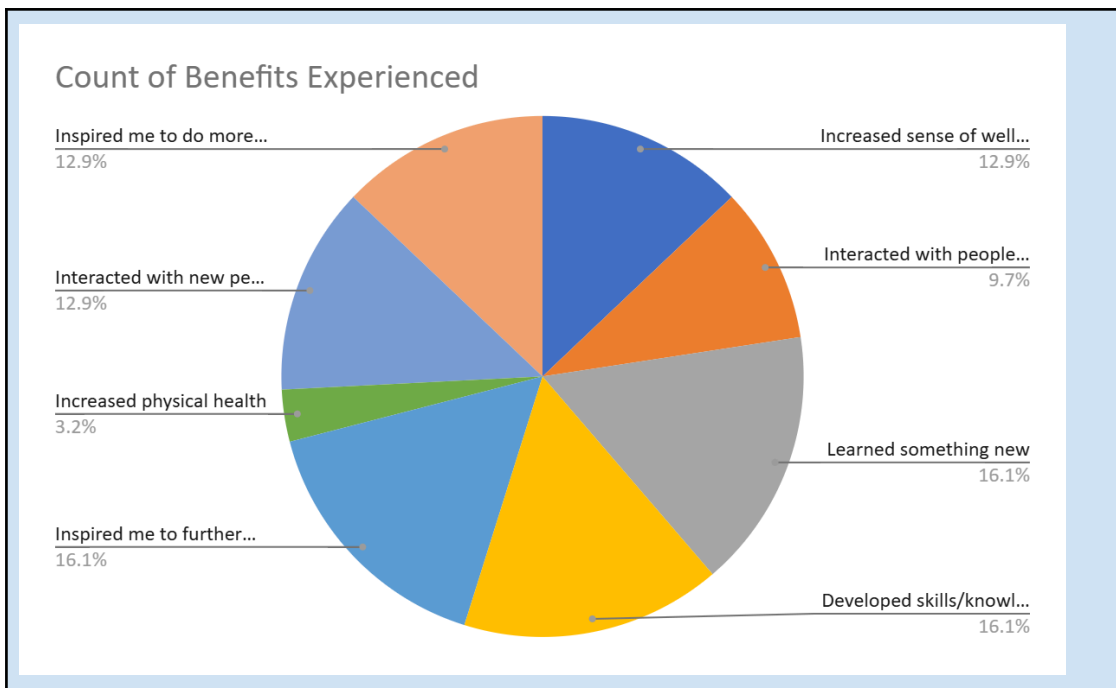


Fig 9. Count of benefits experienced

- 'Learned something new', 'Developed skills/knowledge I already had', and 'Inspired me to further my pre-existing creative practice' were the benefits most commonly experienced by participants, with five out of the six respondents selecting them
- 'Increased sense of wellbeing', and 'Inspired me to do more creative activities in the future' were selected by four of the six respondents
- 'Increased physical health' was the least commonly selected benefit.
- Five out of the six respondents rated their experience 'excellent'; One rated it 'good'
- All six of the respondents said they would attend a similar event in the future.

The survey concluded with a free text question for open feedback. Participants responses were:

- *It was by far the best creative workshop series that I have had the privilege to be a part of. Both Heather and Nicole were exceptional in their delivery of the series. As a Toddler-Mum who struggles with severe mental health issues, it became the highlight of my week. It was the only 2 hours that I felt fully appreciated for who I am, for the skills I have and for what I can offer, outside of parental duties. I am only sad that it has come to an end.*
- *The combination of personal expression through creating art and words was really therapeutic. As well as building a concrete 'body of work' that I could take away with me made me feel like I had really achieved something over the weeks. Having the creche facility with excellent childcare was the dealbreaker in being able to participate or not. I also learnt a lot about how to look after my baby better from the nursery staff. The Foundling workshop leaders were really fantastic and the whole experience was smoothly facilitated for someone with Autism and ADHD*
- *Thank you Nicole and Heather for your support! You made me and my children feel welcome always. Even when I felt like I wanted to walk out and give up! Thank youuuuu, I will miss you. Having withdrawals already haha*
- *More of this of workshops for women who struggle with motherhood or ongoing postpartum depression*
- *The support and empathy from facilitators and participants was wonderful. LOVELY creative and destressing experiences with delightful conversations of parenthood and life and the best part of my week. Sad it is over*
- *Everything was perfect*

The first comment, in which one mother refers to the sessions as 'the highlight of her week' is a significant testament to how a relatively small intervention in terms of time can have a very significant impact.



Participants creating artwork

## 3. Emergent Findings

### 3.1. The Partnership

This most recent round of the programme has been the most ambitious in terms of partners, with the Foundling Museum, the Artist, Home-Start Camden and Islington, 1A Children's Centre and Camden Council's crèche provision all having a stake in the project. The creative sessions themselves also took place in a part of the Children's Centre that is usually used by another agency. With so many moving parts, the potential for tensions arising between stakeholders naturally increases. While the arrangement with the use of the creative studio space requires some clarity of communication going forwards, relations between the partners themselves have been exemplary. In a reflective conversation between the Arts & Wellbeing Manager at the Foundling Museum, the Artist, the Crèche Coordinator and the Community Projects Manager at Home-Start, all four responded positively when asked to describe the partnership. One member of the group described the partnership as "*Amazing*", and expressed how much Home-Start appreciates other organisations working with the mothers they support, "*I think it's really important for them to see themselves, you know, as not just a mum. They're women. They're making things. They're creative... I think it's beautiful*".

The Crèche Coordinator told us "*It's an amazing team. I can see [they] all put [their] heart and soul into everything*". She also spoke about the value of parents having time to themselves without their children, and shared that the experience had challenged the crèche staff to develop new strategies for supporting children to be left alone without their mothers.

The artist praised the 1A Children's Centre (the representative from the children's centre was unable to make the meeting), in particular the Building Manager. She described the space they were ultimately given to use: "*the basement space was just so much more equipped for our needs, and the mums fed back, multiple times, how much they like that space. Because it felt like a studio. It felt creative... I think they'd say something like 'it felt arty'*". However, she also described some difficulties in communication with the agency who normally uses the room. The project had been given access to the space without this having been communicated or confirmed across all of the organisation's staff team, and some tensions arose around the timings and use of materials in the space. The artist and the Arts & Wellbeing Manager were able to iron out these relational difficulties towards the end of the programme, but clearer lines of communication and direct contact between the Arts & Wellbeing Manager and the agency in question from the start would have mitigated the likelihood of tensions arising in the first place.

The Arts & Wellbeing Manager described the partnership using the words: 'generosity' and 'communication'. She spoke about the generosity of all parties involved, highlighting the generous communication from Home-Start and the crèche, who provided two volunteers to support the project, and three crèche workers. She spoke about how welcoming and accommodating 1A Children's Centre was: "*[they] just gave us the keys to the cupboard, and were so welcoming with their spaces... They got the tea and coffee trolley ready for us... it seemed like this was maybe a bit different for them as well, or maybe they were in the process of establishing it. But we needed teaspoons one week, and then some coffee*

*stirrers appeared that they'd ordered for us. They'd ordered in the paper cups, you know, just things like that. They were really thinking about what we might need and how they could support us".* The Arts & Wellbeing Manager acknowledged the tension with the agency around the basement space, but said that the Centre Manager was already looking at how best to support communication with them going forwards. A new project is due to run between January and March 2026, and establishing clear lines of communication around the space in time for that will be vital.

Finally, the 1A Children's Centre manager said *"Our partnership has been collaborative, supportive, and purpose-driven from the outset. Each organisation has brought our own unique strengths and perspectives, but what unites us is a shared commitment to supporting families and young children in meaningful, creative ways. Most importantly, our values align: we all believe in the power of early intervention, inclusive creativity, and community-driven support. This shared vision gives our work a strong foundation, and we're excited about what we can continue to build together."*

Significantly, the partnership across organisations has also enabled more visibility to the work. Physically, by being off-site at 1A Children's Centre, the project became a part of the weekly activity that was happening there. Staff met Stay and Play staff, shared staff spaces with other teams and providers that were delivering activity there. This raised the public reach of the Foundling Museum's work. Another benefit of being in a community space, was that one mother who wasn't able to continue attending had a son in the nursery there, so although she wasn't part of the project, facilitators were able to check-in quite often, offer support and hear updates on her funeral preparations and bereavement.

The Camden Crèche Co-ordinator has also been a strong advocate for the programme. She introduced the team to further Camden staff, enabling for the project to be shared widely across Camden Council's Learning and Family teams through their "Friday Story" platform, leading to new connections in Camden Council. She also made links with the organisation "Campaign for learning" who now want to share the project on their platform. This meets one of the ongoing (informal) programme aims of peer-sharing and supporting sector learning.

Overall, the success of the partnership was built on the foundations of collaborative and clear communication, generosity - of time, resources and space, aligned values, a shared vision and trust.



The artist and a participant in front of a participant's artwork

## 3.2. Facilitator Collaboration

The smooth running of the sessions relies heavily on the artist/facilitator and the Arts & Wellbeing Manager working seamlessly together. This working relationship has tended to be a standout success of the project. As we have observed in previous evaluation reports<sup>4</sup>, the Arts & Wellbeing Manager's practice is informed by an open and collaborative approach that often goes 'above and beyond' the call of duty. The artists that have been commissioned to facilitate Art and Wellbeing projects at the Foundling Museum have tended to have similar approaches and this has generally resulted in clear lines of communication and collaborative leadership between the two parties. This project round was no exception, but having never worked together in this capacity before, the Arts & Wellbeing Manager and the artist had to find their feet with regards to running the sessions. The artist has worked on several Foundling Museum projects previously, both in an artist/facilitator capacity (on a Foundling Museum and Camden Mind creative project and on a Foundling Museum and Coborn Centre creative project) and as interim cover for the Arts & Wellbeing maternity cover when she was on sick leave. In her previous artist/facilitator capacity the artist was working alongside the Arts & Wellbeing maternity cover who was regularly absent for health reasons, which meant that the artist had to run the sessions without significant support. This naturally shaped her approach. The permanent Arts & Wellbeing Manager is much more present and hands on, and so a period of adjustment was necessary. The Arts & Wellbeing Manager initially found that although having a general outline, she could be unclear about the artist's detailed plan and timings for the session, which had to be communicated between them at speed before the session started. The Arts & Wellbeing Manager put this down to a lack of time for face-to-face communication, and requested that the artist send a written plan each week to help her provide the necessary support and infrastructure for the sessions. This was implemented and the Arts & Wellbeing Manager commented "*[Artist] is now sending a written plan with timings each week, which I've found more helpful for being able to support her.*"



Participant artwork and materials

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Spring Evaluation Report: The Foundling Museum and Mind Camden's Healthy Minds Social Prescribing Spring Programme Polly Rodgers and Imogen Slater - May 2022

### 3.3. Off-Site Sessions and Connection to the Foundling Museum Story

This was the first programme to be run, for the main part, away from the Foundling Museum. This arrangement was reached because it allowed for the provision of a crèche (discussed in detail below - 3.4). While the arrangement was ultimately a success, it was not without its initial challenges. Most crucially there remains a question around the impact that running the sessions off-site had on the participants' connection to, and understanding of, the Foundling Museum story, which is a central aim of the project.

Sessions one and ten were run at the Foundling Museum, essentially bookending the project with the Museum. There was an intention to give participants a tour of the Museum gallery in session one, but there was limited time in the session to fit in all the creative activity that was planned (with a staggered start time as mothers and children arrived at different times). The facilitators, with input from participants, chose to prioritise creative activity over having a museum tour. This meant that it fell to the Arts & Wellbeing Manager to introduce participants to the Foundling Hospital story with pictures, stories and anecdotes woven into the sessions themselves. In session 3, she shared images of, and a book about, the Tokens from the collection, which particularly connected for the group: one mother had a strong emotional response which was carefully held by the facilitators. There was a visual connection through the textiles of the billet books and the work that the group were making. The artist and the Arts & Wellbeing Manager also spoke about how to keep the overall framing of the project live for the group, particularly given that not everyone was able to make each session. The artist shared a practice of keeping things "live" from her teaching practice. The Arts & Wellbeing manager and the artist created a poster for the space to do this, with information about the project and an image of a fabric token. It is unclear how much this was referred to by the parents as the engagement with the activities was usually very strong, with parents making the most of every minute of their solo-time. It proved difficult to bring something every week, with so much activity to fit into each session and parents so keen to make the most of their creative time. Consequently, the participants' relationship with the museum was held primarily through their relationship with the artist and the Arts & Wellbeing Manager. Positive feelings about the Foundling Museum staff led to positive feelings about the museum.

In session ten there was an intention to deliver a green-screen activity in which images were displayed on ipads for participants and children to explore the gallery space with. Again, due to the time restraints of one participant, this was not possible. Given the sensitive nature of the Foundling Hospital story, and its potential resonance with participants' experiences, the way the story is introduced needs to be handled with care. The timings need to be right in order to ensure enough space to 'hold' participants through any difficult responses. The ambitious creative programme, staggered start times, and transitions with dropping children off and collecting them make the sessions feel very full, and time for the hospital story was squeezed.

The ongoing connection participants have with the museum will ultimately be evidenced by whether or not they return to the museum independently following the conclusion of the project. Perhaps an optional visit to the museum arranged outside of the sessions

themselves might support this. Several of this cohort already have a strong connection with the Museum through previous projects held on site, so it will be interesting to observe how strong a connection is established and maintained as more and more participants only experience the Museum via the first and last sessions, the Museum staff and the stories that are woven into the sessions.

Significantly, the mothers' artwork and creative writing was displayed at the Museum for the final session of the project. This is the first time in the programme that it has been on public display; for the parents to see their work exhibited prominently in the centre of one of the main galleries, seemed to make explicit the value that the Museum places on this work. This is discussed further below (section 3.7).



Participants viewing their display at the Museum

Whilst there have been challenges regarding the connection to the Museum, working off-site at the Children's Centre has brought many benefits (further discussed in 3.4). The manager of the Children's Centre told us that the space provides *"Integrated support services: The Children's Centre environment offers additional support services (e.g., childcare, health visitors, parenting advice and support, CAMHS), which complements the aims of the programme and provides a holistic support system for participants"*, and a *"Child-friendly space: The venue is equipped for young children, enabling participants to focus more fully on the sessions while also accommodating their children's needs in a safe and welcoming space"*, both clear advantages to the sessions being held at the Children's Centre.

### 3.4. The Crèche

A major development of this iteration of the project was the provision of a crèche to enable mothers with children under five to attend the sessions without paying for childcare. The pilot project included childcare provided by Home-Start volunteers. This model proved extremely labour intensive (volunteers had to take children off site as there was no room available on site at the Museum, so a 1:1 ratio of volunteers to children was required) and was ultimately unsustainable. Following iterations did not provide childcare and this excluded mothers who were unable to arrange childcare privately - often those most in-need.

Through a partnership with 1A Children's Centre, who provided the project with space for both the creative sessions and the crèche, and Camden Council, who provided crèche staff, this iteration of the project successfully overcame the limitations of capacity and access that previous versions had suffered from.

However, the child care dynamics were not without their challenges. Some children struggled with being left in the crèche. This gave rise to a number of conflicting 'needs' and parenting models being voiced by different stakeholders, and elicited careful management by the Arts & Wellbeing Manager: Home-Start volunteers felt that crèche staff were calling mothers back too quickly when a child got upset, the Arts and Wellbeing Manager was conscious of balancing this against modelling healthy attachment, as well as the mothers' need for creative time to themselves. It was important to maintain a non-judgemental space for both mothers and crèche workers, and this was ultimately achieved through careful handling and clear communication by the Arts & Wellbeing Manager. As the Crèche Coordinator explained:

*Initially as soon as they cried, it was like, 'Oh, they've got to go back to their mums, you know, get the mums back in to settle a bit'. And we knew early on that wasn't gonna work... I know from other sessions how disruptive it is... Obviously, if there's a child that's really, really upset, we don't let them cry for a long time, and we will get the parents back in. But me and Heather had a conversation about the importance of the parents being there for every session. And a bit of a background [about] the parents was really useful as well. To know where they were coming from, the struggles that some of them were having. So that was really good, that I could share a bit of that with the crèche workers, who had also gone through similar situations. So once I told them about that, they were a bit more understanding... The parents have to be settled and confident with you to be able to leave them. So it's kind of like saying to (the crèche staff), 'you need to put a bit more in, you know. Go a bit more above and beyond.'*

Though there were some initial challenges, ultimately all parties spoke highly of the arrangement, praising the extra mile that crèche workers went, and the clear communication between all parties. The final session at the Children's Centre (session nine) culminated in parents and session facilitators all going up to the crèche together for a shared song and for the crèche staff to hand out 'All about me' reports that the staff had prepared and printed to commemorate the children's time with them. The artist commented on the parallel between the children's reports and books the mothers had been making in the creative sessions.

There was a lovely moment when one of the mothers (who has recently had an autism and ADHD diagnosis) expressed her thanks to the crèche staff for sharing some tips to help her 'be a better mother' to her daughter. The crèche staff were able to reflect back to her that they thought she was a brilliant mother. This idea of skill sharing was also reflected in the 1A Children's Centre Manager's feedback: "*Partnering with quality services, such as the crèche has also supported parents to learn valuable parenting skills, through role modelling and conversations.*"

The crèche space itself also presented challenges. It was ideally set-up with toys and activities for 0-5 year-olds, however, it was also the access route for kitchen staff, as well as having a window through which children could look out onto the reception, seeing people coming and going. The Children's Manager shared the following reflection on how small interventions can have significant impacts:

*One stand-out moment for me involved a young child who struggled to settle during the early weeks of the programme. We noticed she became distressed whenever someone walked past the door, so we took steps to support her by covering the glass and asking staff to avoid entering the room during sessions. These small changes had a big impact — over time, the child was able to relax, engage with her peers, and play more confidently. This also created the space for her mum to participate fully in the group, which was lovely to see*



Participant artwork

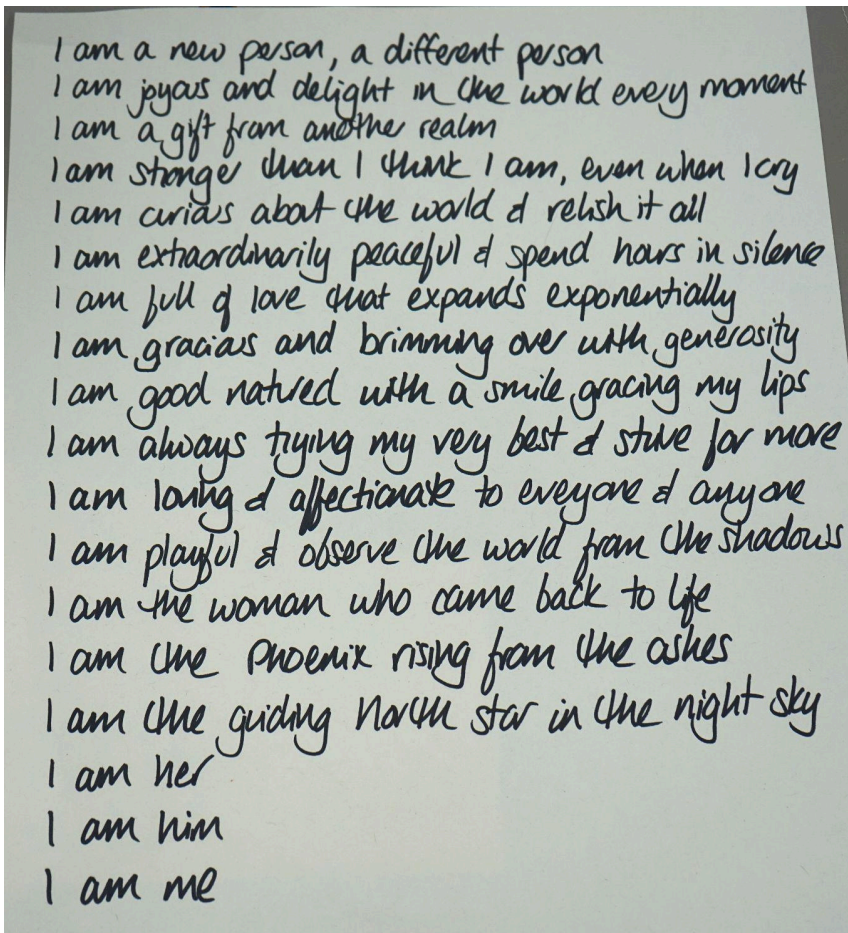
### 3.5. The Delivery Model

Overall the delivery model has been a success, and with each iteration it has been refined and developed.

An interesting development that has emerged with this round of the programme is additional time being given over to 'warm up activities'. Whereas in the past warm-ups were kept to a minimum to leave space for the visual arts content, this time round up to an hour was spent on what could be considered warm-up activity. Previously one word check-in and check-outs on post-it notes have been employed. However, in session two the artist introduced a collective verbal check-in. The delivery team recognised that this enabled more collective recognition of how everyone was feeling, as opposed to the post-its which were more individual, which seemed of greater benefit to the group and supported the project's aim of creating connections between people. Over time this was refined to 'How am I?', which came to be known as 'vibrations'. Facilitators would transcribe the mothers' words creating a collective poem. At the end of the session a similar process would be repeated, in response to the prompt 'Today I...'. In a reflective conversation, the artist explained where the 'today I...' concept had originated:

*I've started this project at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Um, on the cot side of the babies' cots there's 'Today, I...' and there's like milestone moments for the baby. And I remember seeing that, and then thinking about that. Kind of the importance of the recognition of just getting through a day. Yeah, so that was just a way of getting everyone in that busy space in the crèche on that second session. And it really worked... it became like a reflection. It became solidarity. And it was like a collective celebration of what we've done... And that didn't necessarily have to be physical. It was like, today, I...turned up, you know.*

Additionally, from session five, prompted by a suggestion by a Home-Start volunteer, the artist introduced an "ice-breaker" question. At the start of each session she would ask a question, such as 'what is your mama superpower?' Or 'how do you get your child to sleep?'. These questions provided an open space for mothers to share tactics and experiences and to build connections with other mothers.



Individual participant poem

Creative writing prompts were also introduced from week three, with mothers creating individual pieces which were then read aloud to the group if they chose to. For a few mothers with a background in creative writing, these took on a high level of importance. Alongside the collective poems, this writing time followed on from a soft start to accommodate the staggered arrival times of the mothers who were coming from dropping their children off at the crèche. The artist told us that she had previously 'de-valued' these more conversational, written activities by comparison to the visual arts aspect of the sessions, but that she ultimately found them to be intrinsic to the success of group cohesion and community building. The Arts & Wellbeing Manager also commented that everything that was either dropped, contracted or expanded in the sessions was done deliberately and in direct response to the needs of the group, highlighting the flexibility and responsiveness of the approach.

The Arts & Wellbeing Manager reflected that the visual arts aspect of the project was ambitiously creative and required an extensive amount of logistics and materials, which given that everything had to be brought from the museum to the Children's Centre for each session was sometimes challenging. The artist agreed and wondered whether some more simple creative activities, such as printmaking might be valuable in the future, especially given the potential for self-criticism that some of the creative activities bring with them. That said, the books that the participants created were beautiful and the mothers were delighted with them.



Participant artwork on display in the museum

The sessions were extremely 'full', but the Arts & Wellbeing Manager commented on the sense of ritual that this created, which had the effect of therapeutically 'containing' the mothers, giving them space to explore and share their experiences in a non-judgemental, safe space. She praised the way that the artist had woven opportunities for reflective practice through the writing activities into the sessions.

The 1A Children's Centre Manager told us that the programme had benefitted their organisations by highlighting *"the values of embedding artistic approaches when working with families, we have also benefited from engaging a group of parent/carers who may not have previously accessed services from our centre."*

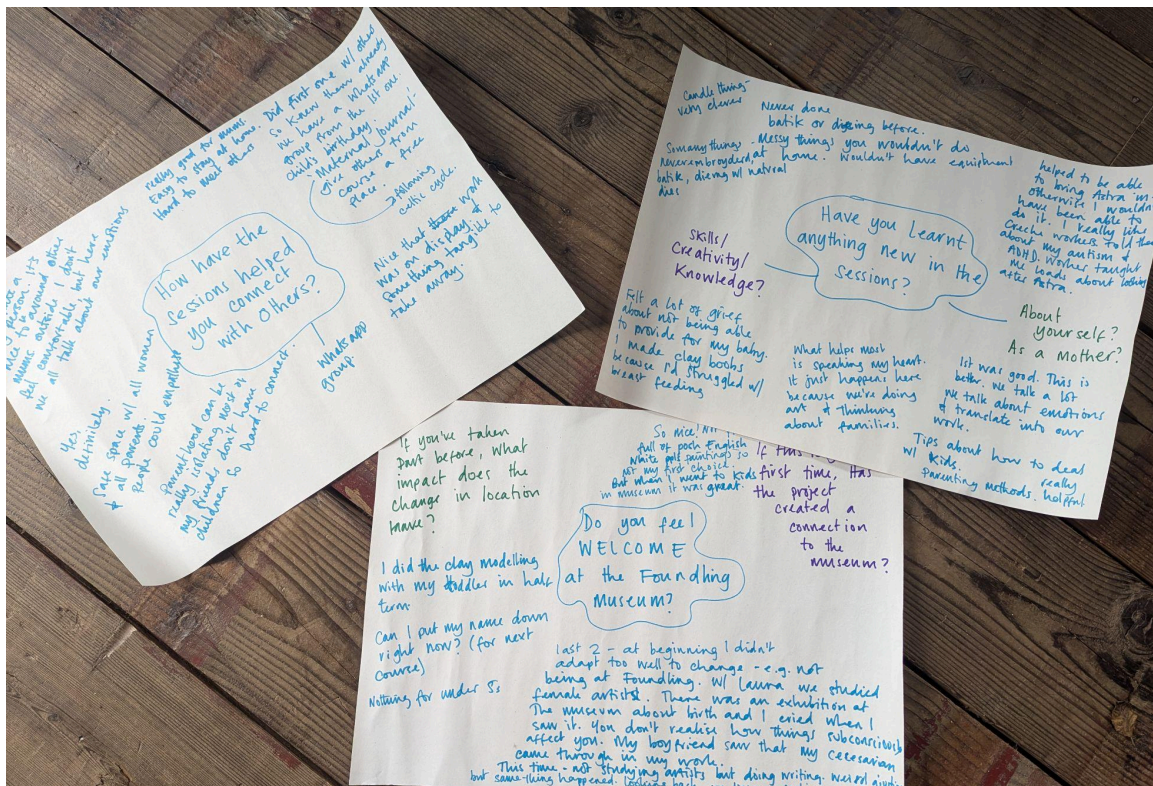
### 3.6. Hearing from Participants

As we have seen in previous programme evaluations, mothers benefit enormously from having time away from their children to reconnect with their sense of themselves as 'more than just a mum', and creative women in their own right.

In a series of one-to-one and small group conversations in session nine, the evaluator asked the mothers to reflect on three key aspects of the programme:

- The extent to which the sessions had helped them to connect with other mothers

- What they had learned in the sessions - both artistically, and about themselves as mothers
- The extent to which they felt welcome at the Foundling Museum



Evaluator notes from reflective conversations with participants

The mothers we spoke with valued the opportunity to connect with other mothers, finding a safe and empathetic space to discuss emotions and shared experiences, especially given the often isolating nature of parenthood: *“I’m quite a shy person. It’s nice to be around other mums. Outside I don’t feel comfortable, but here we all talk about our emotions.”* and *“Parenthood can be really isolating. Most of my friends don’t have children so it’s hard to connect”*. One mother shared: *“I was so nervous to come, I thought I couldn’t do it, but I’m so glad I did. Some time is better than no time. So much better to be here than at home”*.

The sessions provided a unique outlet for participants to express and process complex emotions and experiences (e.g., struggles with breastfeeding and C-sections) through creative activities. One participant told us that *“What helps most is speaking my heart. It just happens here because we’re doing art and thinking about families”*. This idea that ‘speaking my heart’ happens automatically as a result of ‘doing art and thinking about families’ draws to mind the idea of making alongside that we have discussed in several previous evaluation reports, for example: *“Making alongside’ has emerged as a key approach, allowing participants to experience the benefits of a therapeutic space without being in therapy”*<sup>5</sup>.

Participants told us about the new artistic skills and knowledge they had learnt (e.g. batik, dyeing, embroidery, clay modeling), often through messy or elaborate activities not easily

<sup>5</sup> Evaluation Report: The Foundling Museum and Home- Start Camden and Islington Creative Project (Pilot). Polly Rodgers and Imogen Slater - April 2023

replicated at home *“Never done batik or dyeing before...Messy things you wouldn't do at home. Wouldn't have equipment”*. While participants spoke less than we had anticipated about new knowledge they had acquired about themselves as mothers, the sense of sharing knowledge and mothering tips as a group, as well as learning from professionals emerged as a key finding: *“Tips about how to deal with kids. Parenting methods are really helpful”* and *“I really like the crèche workers. I told them about my autism and ADHD. A worker taught me loads about looking after [my baby]”*.

A number of parents chose to take their work home, in order to finish it for display. One parent shared that she'd taken her embroidery home and had really enjoyed sitting in her rocking chair and embroidering. She said the family were all around her, but *“I'm doing this.”* She felt proud of what she had made, she had never sewed before, and wanted to buy herself an embroidery hoop.

The provision of childcare was crucial for participation: *“It helped to be able to bring [my baby] in, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do it.”*



Participants' artwork, and participant creating artwork with child

Finally, while some participants initially felt the Museum wasn't for them due to its perceived "posh" or "white" aesthetic, the project did appear to foster a connection. Participants engaged with the museum through specific events (e.g., "Kids in Museum," "clay modelling") and appreciated the accessibility, even if it wasn't generally free. The impact of the sessions being different from programme to programme was discussed, with one mother sharing that: *“At the beginning I didn't adapt too well to change e.g. the sessions not being at the Foundling. With Laura we studied female artists. There was an exhibition at the museum about birth and I cried when I saw it. You don't realize how things subconsciously affect you...This time we're not studying artists but doing writing. It's weird adjusting, but the same thing happened. Looking back you discover feelings you hadn't registered at time”*.

### 3.7. Sharing the Work



Participants' artwork on display in the museum

While the Foundling Museum's creative collaborations with Camden Mind have generally culminated in a public display/sharing of the work created, this has never happened for the Home-Start partnership. The one exception to this was in the Autumn/Winter 2023 programme when there was a fundraising event taking place for friends and benefactors of the Museum, and some of the art work that had been created was shared at the event. For this programme round the Arts & Wellbeing Manager wanted to give the mothers the opportunity to share their work publicly in the Museum if they wanted to. Although some mothers were unclear what this would mean when the Arts & Wellbeing Manager initially suggested it, once they understood, they were keen to participate. The books that the mothers had made out of their dyed and batiked fabrics were displayed alongside printed zines containing images and the collective poems that had been written at the start and end of the sessions. Having the work displayed so beautifully, and in such a prominent location in the museum was impactful for the participants. Exclamations including "Wow! Oh God, look!", and "Is this on for the whole day?" The Arts & Wellbeing Manager commented in the session log for that day, "There was a sense of pride in it being open to the public and people were visibly quite blown away by the exhibition".

The Winter/Spring 2024 Camden Mind collaboration (when the Arts and Wellbeing Manager was on maternity leave and the maternity cover was periodically on sick leave), there were some hiccups regarding gaining consent to use the name of a participant in a public display. This culminated in a participant's name not being included because consent was difficult to obtain, and the participant ultimately being upset by this. Session log 10 for this project recounts how one participant was unaware that her work was going to be included in the public display, because she missed the last two sessions, and when she saw her work

publicly displayed she was “*really pleased*”. This approach, to start with an assumption of inclusion (and remove later if consent is withheld) appears to have worked well in this situation, and may be a more inclusive approach going forward.

Having the work displayed so prominently, even if only for two days, meant that most Museum staff, including much of the Learning Department, saw the exhibition. This served the dual purpose of promoting the project throughout the Museum and serving as an example of the possibilities of tying learning and outreach activities with the broader Museum aims and collection. Mothers were also invited to bring family back to the Museum to share their work if they chose. Due to the timings, this wasn’t possible for most, but one of the volunteers did bring her son to see her work on show which seemed to be a proud moment for both.

### 3.8. Positive Endings

As we have discussed in previous evaluation reports, transitions are often challenging, and endings particularly so. Parents value the creative time to themselves and the connection with other mothers so much that the sessions coming to an end can be anxiety invoking and/or sad. The availability of space, as well as a therapeutically informed awareness of bounded time, has usually meant that the final session has concluded on time. However this time round, the session space was not needed for anything else immediately afterwards and facilitators allowed the session to run over time, with consent from participants, and for participants to leave when they were ready. This meant that there was space for participants to say individual goodbyes without feeling rushed. The Arts & Wellbeing Manager commented that it was a “*really positive warm ending*”.

This positivity and warmth was supported by participants sharing readings of their poems, certificate and gift giving, and a final creative printmaking activity which prompted one participant to say “*This is the best creative thing I’ve ever done. I’m going to put 3 up and frame them.*” This ‘ritualistic’ approach to endings is a key component of the approach that the Arts & Wellbeing Manager has developed for the programme, supporting the principles of genuine care for people and creating communities based on trust, safety and accountability at all levels.

### 3.9. Building Bridges and Connections

The Arts and Wellbeing Programme at the Foundling Museum is always conscious of building bridges that connect participants to other opportunities once the series of sessions they are attending comes to an end. This happens in a number of ways:

- Participants are encouraged to attend more than one programme round, serving the dual purpose of building a ‘core group’ of participants, which gives the group a sense of identity and of providing participants who attend for more than one round with deeper and more lasting benefits
- Previous participants of the programme are encouraged to rejoin as volunteers where appropriate, this gives participants a sense of purpose, progression and confidence

- Participants have been offered ongoing, free of charge access to the Museum (though it remains to be seen how much this will be taken up, encouraging participants to visit the Museum together may support the likelihood)
- In the final session the previous programme artist and current Family Programme Manager at the Foundling Museum visited the session to talk about the workshop programme that's coming up in the summer and to invite the families to join. She was able to reassure parents that though many of the sessions are billed as being for over fives, they were almost always able to adapt the sessions for younger children
- The Arts & Wellbeing Manager hands out flyers advertising upcoming activities, as well as sharing her Foundling Museum business card should participants want to access activities in the future
- The facilitators supported one member of the group to set up a WhatsApp group so that participants could stay in touch with each other following the programme
- The Arts & Wellbeing Manager signposted participants to other family support services outside of the Foundling Museum.

In the final session, one participant asked the artist for her social media handles so they could stay in touch. The artist was conscious of not giving this out for safeguarding reasons, but also didn't want to hurt the participant's feelings. This was managed well and the artist told the participant that the Arts & Wellbeing Manager would be sharing her contact details instead. The Arts & Wellbeing Manager acknowledged that *"There is a holding in this project of personal and professional, given that the facilitators are sharing their experiences of parenthood as peers. There are clear boundaries, facilitators not over-sharing their emotional situations for example. This sharing of experience however makes the connections real, and more difficult perhaps for the group to understand that facilitators can't make these personal connections through social media etc."* The situation seems to have been handled with care and compassion, whilst maintaining safeguarding practice. Hallmarks of the programme are a non-hierarchical, relational and person-centred approach, working alongside participants and taking genuine care. This situation underscores the importance of safeguarding as part of this, and the therapeutically 'containing' value of clear boundaries. It demonstrates the facilitation team's ability to remain alive to this at the same time as building real and personal connections with the group.



Participant and delivery team in certificate-giving at the Foundling Museum

## 4. Recommendations and Looking Forwards

In this section we draw out some recommendations for future work:

### Space

- **Establish clear lines of communication regarding shared spaces:** Clearer lines of communication and direct contact with the agencies using the creative studio at 1A Children's Centre before the next programme commences may help to prevent tensions

### Sessions and Programme Design

- **The provision of childcare is essential:** While there are logistical challenges to providing childcare for the sessions, the impact it has is huge in terms of allowing parents struggling the most to attend the sessions. This provision is worth the logistical effort it takes to implement.
- **Allocate sufficient time for the Foundling Hospital story integration:** While it is understandably difficult to find the time within sessions for the Foundling Hospital story to be introduced, we recommend that this be carefully built into session plans to allow time and space for emotional responses, given the sensitive nature of the story. We anticipate that a strong grasp of the story will engender a deeper connection to the Museum
- **Continue to hold plans lightly:** The responsiveness and flexibility of the programme has been a huge success, with the artist herself being surprised by the importance of the writing activities and how central they became. This responsiveness should hold a central place in the design of the programme going forwards
- **Consider simpler creative activities:** It may be beneficial to consider incorporating simpler creative activities like printmaking in future sessions to potentially reduce self-criticism among participants and ease logistical challenges
- **Continue with the 'Vibrations' and 'Today I...' poetry activities:** The "Vibrations" and "Today I..." poems were found to be intrinsic to group cohesion and community building and this approach should be maintained and potentially further refined
- **Clarify the target audience with Home-Start:** While Home-Start have marketed the programme to 'parents' rather than 'mothers', the sessions themselves are designed to explore the experience - often physical - of motherhood. Both approaches are valuable in their own right, but we recommend that the design of the programme is clearly aligned with Home-Start's communication strategy. This will probably require a clarifying conversation with Home-Start.
- **Maintain the ritualistic approach to endings:** The positive and warm ending of the sessions, supported by participants sharing their work, through the exhibition and poetry readings, certificate and gift giving, and a final creative activity, fosters a sense of closure, care and appreciation

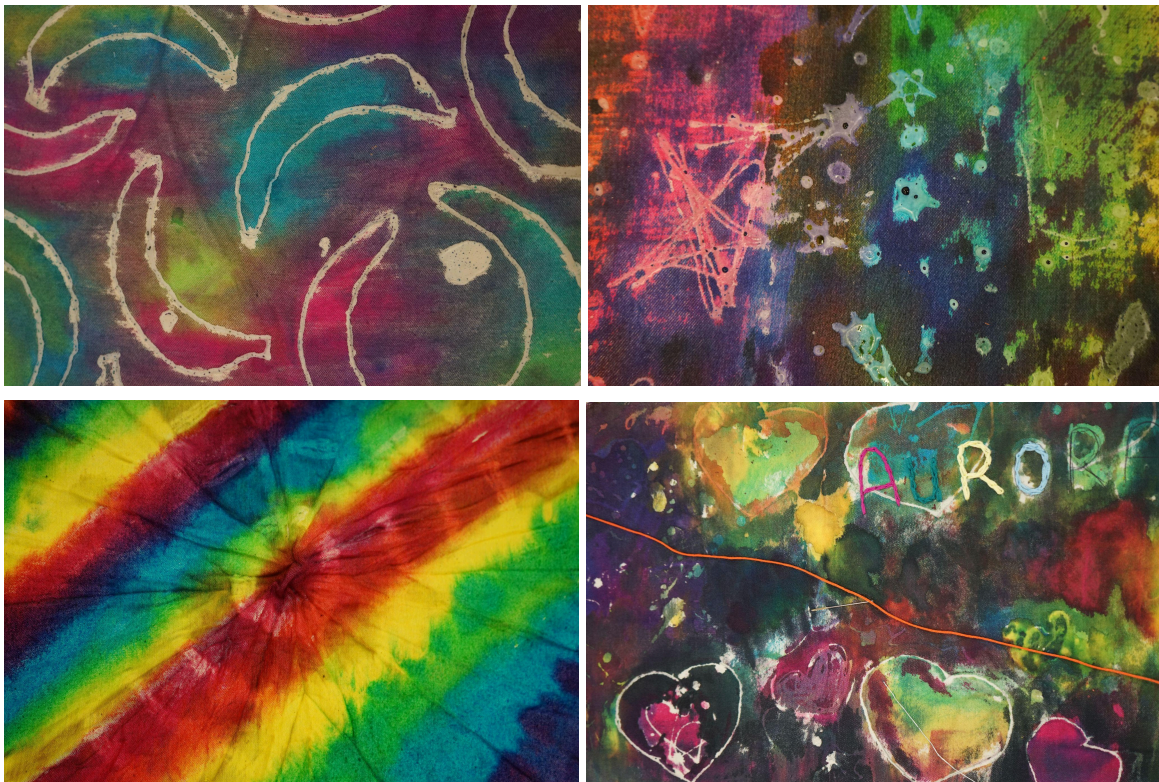
## Ongoing Connections

- **Continue efforts to build bridges and connections:** The team's commitment to building bridges is a core component of the programme. Connecting participants to ongoing opportunities, such as encouraging multiple programme attendance, offering volunteer roles, providing free museum access, advertising upcoming activities, supporting peer WhatsApp groups, and signposting to other support services supports this culture of care that the programme fosters
- **Maintain clear safeguarding boundaries while fostering connection:** Continue to carefully manage the balance between personal connections and professional safeguarding boundaries
- **Assume inclusion for public display of work (with the option to opt-out):** The approach of starting with an assumption of inclusion for public display of artwork (and removing if consent is not given) appears to be more inclusive and could be a valuable approach moving forward
- **Longitudinal analysis:** It could be valuable to host a group conversation with women from different cohorts including some that have been involved in more than one to look back and think about the impact / difference it has made in their lives over the longer term.

## 5. Conclusion

This report offers a detailed account of the challenges and successes of the most recent iteration of the Foundling Museum and Home-Start Camden and Islington Creative Project, Spring Summer 2025. The team (in particular the Arts & Wellbeing Manager) faced a number of additional challenges this time around, most notably the added logistical complexities of running the sessions off site and the added difficulty of introducing the participants to the Foundling Hospital story within the context of not being on site at the Museum. However, the shift to an off-site model with crèche provision proved instrumental in increasing accessibility for mothers and children. The strong partnerships forged, collaborative facilitator working, and responsive programme adjustments, such as the collaborative poetry activities, all stood out as examples of best practice, demonstrating the care and commitment that is evident in the planning and delivery of Arts & Wellbeing activity at the Foundling Museum.

The mothers we spoke to reported significant benefits, including building connections with other mothers, learning new artistic skills, and a vital space for emotional expression and self-reflection. The positive reception of the public display of artwork provided a moment for the participants to step back and appreciate what they had created. A real sense of pride was evident in their responses to the display. Looking forward, the recommendations emphasise strengthening communication with shared space agencies, ensuring dedicated time for the Foundling Hospital story, exploring simpler creative activities, and maintaining the effective ritualistic endings. The new partnership model developed for this iteration of the project not only supported the project delivery, but also shows ongoing promise for peer-learning across sectors that could be further explored in future.



Participant artwork