



Converge Evaluation and Research Team  
Insight through experience

The background of the entire page is a vibrant, abstract composition of various colored paint splashes and blotches. The colors include shades of purple, blue, green, brown, yellow, and pink, all overlapping and bleeding into each other to create a rich, textured, and artistic feel.

# The Arts Network Evaluation 2022



With many thanks to:

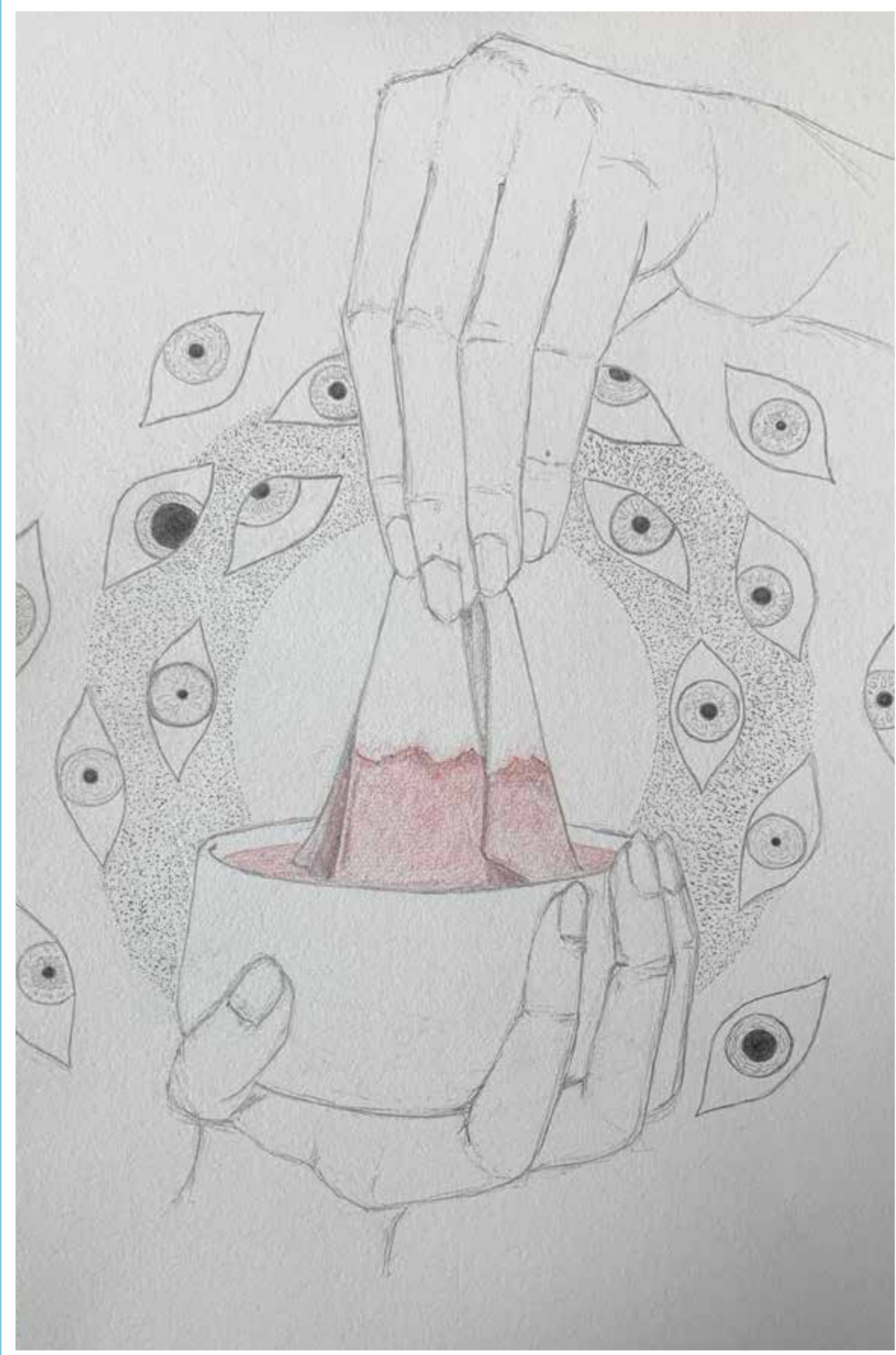
The six **Arts Network** members who worked so hard with us as co-researchers in this evaluation. Without them this report would not have been possible.

The **Arts Network** members who created such beautiful postcards for us, and who completed our questionnaire.

The **Arts Network** staff members who supported our evaluation and worked on our draft report.

# The Arts Network Evaluation 2022

The Converge Evaluation and Research Team  
Autumn 2022





*Left artwork:*

Stricken by unending gaze,  
a shroud of dread miasma.  
Drawn into a stagnant daze,  
the shrivelled mind withers.

Sensation defined by dissonance,  
weak glimpses of lucidity.  
Endeavours to imbibe life sanguine,  
self coherence with reality.

*(The artist wishes to remain anonymous).*



## Executive Summary

The **Converge** Evaluation and Research Team (**CERT**), a group of researchers with lived experience of mental health challenges based at **York St John University**, were commissioned **Arts Network** and the **Igen Trust** to complete an annual evaluation of **Arts Network**. **Arts Network** is a charity in Lewisham providing a **programme of creative arts for people with severe and enduring mental health challenges**. The aim of this evaluation was to **gather the views and opinions of Arts Network members, staff and external partners** using participatory research approaches.

The key difference between this evaluation and previous **CERT** evaluations of **Arts Network** is that this time we **involved Arts Network members as co-researchers** with **CERT** throughout the evaluation process, encouraging them to take the lead as much as was feasible, beginning with designing the evaluation through to analysing the data we collected and drawing conclusions.

**Methods:** **CERT** researchers visited **Arts Network** engaged a group of six **Arts Network** members as co-researchers across four sessions: **(1) an initial planning session** where the research questions and research methods were chosen; **(2) a questionnaire design session**; **(3) a questionnaire analysis session**; and **(4) a postcard analysis session** (not all member co-researchers came to every session). The members chose these research questions:

*What difference does Arts Network make to your day?*

*Why is art important to you?*

The key research method the members chose was **using postcards** to answer these questions – for example, drawing, painting or writing. A **questionnaire** was also designed to offer **Arts Network** members a **choice of ways** in which they could engage in this evaluation (they could do either one or both). We made email contact with two external partners – **The Horniman Museum** and **Art Lift**.

**Findings:** There are currently **121 members actively engaging** in programme activity and 93 'associate members' who are not currently engaging in workshops, but who receive communications, can attend visits and access any volunteering opportunities. In the past year there were 59 referrals.

**Postcard thematic analysis:** Twenty-one postcards were created by members, plus one more substantial piece of art (on cover). Alongside the member co-researchers, we completed a thematic analysis of the postcards. We **identified five key themes** that described members' experiences of **Arts Network**:

**An oasis or sanctuary:** using words such as '*oasis*', '*sanctuary*', '*room to breathe*', '*space*', '*relaxation*', '*refreshing*', and nature-related words. A recurring theme in this evaluation appears here: that for some **Arts Network** is quite literally a '*life saver*'.

**Playfulness:** it is clear that a sense of playfulness at **Arts Network** is important to members, using words such as *'fun'*, *'playful'*, *'laughter'*, *'joy'*, *'energy'* and *'mischief'* – one wrote *"coming through these doors makes me smile each time"*

**Acceptance and appreciation:** members used words such as *'appreciation'*, *'love'*, *'understanding'*, *'openness'* to express the relationships they have with other members and with **Arts Network** staff. Looking at the postcards, member co-researchers described how for them, **Arts Network** has nurtured a sense of *'belonging'*; *'unity'*; *'community'*; *'family'*; *'companionship'*; *'teamwork'*; *'feeling wanted'*; *'togetherness'*; and *'mutuality'*.

**Transformation:** members used words such as *'journey'*; *'transformative'*; and *'metamorphosis'* describing how **Arts Network** had led to transformation in their lives by bringing out their creativity, learning new skills and gaining knowledge.

**Freedom:** Members used phrases such as *'freedom to try'*, *'freedom to be oneself'*, *'freedom from restrictive attitudes about art and abilities'*, *'flexible'*, *'fresh, bright ideas'*, *'colourful'*, *'flyaway'*.

**Structure:** members used words such as *'structured'*; *'reliable'*; offering *'consistency'*; *order*; and *'grounding'*. Attending one or two workshops in a week can offer a way of creating a routine. Members described attending as the highlight of their week, offering a reason to leave their house.

### Questionnaire data:

The questionnaire data indicated that **while at Arts Network members feel** happier; more relaxed; more sociable; more optimistic; more confident; find it easier to talk to; feel more useful; feel like they are contributing something; feel safe and respected; and have reduced feelings of loneliness. For some members, and for some factors, **these changes carry over to their lives outside of Arts Network** (e.g. feelings of relaxation; sociability; optimism; confidence; feeling like you're making a positive contribution).

We asked whether members felt **Arts Network had helped with their mental health this year:** 77% indicated that it had made it much better or a bit better. One member explained how *"Arts Network is a bit of respite. It's a bit of calmness... away from that busyness outside."*

We explored the **social aspects of Arts Network:** meeting up outside; communicating outside; and looking out for each other. Data suggested that for some members, but not all, these aspects are important to them.

**70% of members** reported that attending **Arts Network** has **helped them cope with the stresses of life;** the same number reported that **Arts Network improved their wellbeing;** and 60% reported that it **benefited their self-esteem.**



**Arts Network's flexibility is extremely important to members:** 71% reported being able to "choose what I do at the workshop" was important; 71% reported "not having to attend regularly" was important; 86% said "no pressure to do activities" was important.

We asked **how important Arts Network is to members' lives.** The four most common answers were "I look forward to learning new things"; "It takes my mind off things"; "I feel part of a community at Arts Network"; and "it's something I really look forward to each week".

We asked **what members thought of the staff at Arts Network:** almost all respondents reported that they are welcoming; respectful; empathic; helpful; give you space to talk through things; help to think outside the box; they listen; challenge you to try new things; and they are supportive.

The questionnaire data indicate that **Arts Network** members believe it helps them **engage more broadly** in their community.

**Stay Connected Magazine:** Has a circulation of **830 copies**, and remains **extremely popular** with members. It is also sent to many external partners.

**Social media reach and online provision:** **Arts Network** have continued to **increase their social media reach**, although since returning to the workshop they no longer create YouTube videos ([archive is still available](#)). **Arts Network** still offer two Zoom sessions per week for those who find it harder to come to the workroom.

**New locations:** **Arts Network** are moving to a **new purpose-built site in Southwark in 2024-5**. This is currently awaiting planning permission. To prepare for this they have started work in the local community, offering workshops at London Bridge. While this is an exciting time for **Arts Network** – several members commented on **feeling afraid of losing Arts Network** (not in relation to discussions about the move). Because of these pre-existing anxieties, **care should be taken with communicating changes** to members who may be worried about the developments taking place.

**External partnerships:** **Arts Network** have **maintained partnerships** with key institutions and organisations, including the local mental health Trust (**SLAM**) and **The Horniman Museum**, alongside paying a key role in a national network of arts and mental health organisations established during Covid. Other **new partnerships** include **Dulwich Picture Gallery; Wild Cat Wilderness; Tower Bridge; Thames 21; and Hear Myself Think.**

**Trips:** **Arts Network** organises regular trips to museums, galleries and exhibitions. These trips seem to be **particularly important** to some of the members which go on them, increasing their confidence and broadening their friendship groups. Some members reported experiencing barriers to attending, such as whether they need to use public transport to get there.

**Exhibitions:** There have been **four exhibitions** in the **Arts Network Gallery** in the past year. There have been three external exhibitions: **Dulwich Picture Gallery; Ninth Life** (Catford); and billboards in **Brockley** and **Forest Hill** (to coincide with World Mental Health Day 2022).

**Thriving Communities Project:** In July 2022, **Arts Network** took part in the **Thriving Communities Project** (social prescribing). **Arts Network** was one of twelve organisations to take part, the **Thriving Communities Project** received 33 referrals in all, nine of these referrals were to **the Arts Networks' project: an eight-week workshop entitled 'Outsider'** which supported participants to create art using techniques that were new to them.

### **Interviews:**

**Workshop facilitators:** both workshop facilitators joined during lockdown, and they identified a **process of trial and error** and rebuilding in terms of moving back into the studio, describing getting people back as 'a slow slog'. They are continuing to offer Zoom classes to those who need it, but are **working hard to encourage members to return to the studio**, including hybrid sessions with some members on Zoom interacting with members in the workshop. They have put **considerable effort** in making sure members who haven't been for a long time **feel able to come back**, including offering ongoing short-term projects, so commitment to attending on consecutive weeks is less important.

**Managers:** They described several staff/board member changes. In addition, they identified that **Arts Network is still processing the challenges of Covid**. There are members who remain too frightened to leave the house or to use public transport – extensive effort from staff has been put in to **maintaining a connection with those members**. **Arts Network** are now **offering more workshop spaces** than pre-covid times. They have continued to **develop their volunteering programme** for members who wish to move on in partnership with the local mental health Trust. The challenge of moving to the new site in **Southwark** will take a lot of management time in the coming years.

**Addressing 2021's ambitions and recommendations:** **Arts Network** have been **successful** in addressing last year's ambitions and recommendations, with many still being worked on. Particular accomplishments include **broadening their community partnerships** with pop-ups and external workshops; increasing the **number of workshops** on offer; and increasing their **social media presence**. **Arts Network** would like to have a Social Return on Investment calculation done, but at present it is not financially feasible using existing funding.

**Suggestions for future development:** **(1)** Continue to **consolidate** their current offering as we emerge from the pandemic; **(2)** Continue to work on local **community outreach**; **(3)** Be careful about **communicating with members about** the move to **Southwark**; **(4)** Trying to get **specific funding** for a Social Return on Investment calculation; **(5) Looking at trips** – how people get to them, and whether members choose to take part; **(6)** Continue **exploring opportunities** related to Zoom, **Stay Connected** and social media.

**Summary and conclusions:** Arts Network continues to be **highly successful** in offering a safe and nurturing environment to highly vulnerable people living with severe and enduring mental health challenges. It is clear that at Arts Network, members can **use creativity to achieve personal goals, gain confidence and skills, and develop healthy and supportive relationships**. Members value the learning opportunities; the chance of distraction from their mental health challenges; feeling part of a community; making friends; and having something to look forward to each week. The **staff continue to work extremely hard** to offer a high level of service quality, and have shown a great deal of flexibility and responsiveness in finding their route out of the pandemic. Whilst it is exciting, the move to the new site will have to be **carefully communicated** to existing members as it is likely some will find the change unsettling or difficult.

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# 1. Introduction

The **Converge** Evaluation and Research Team (**CERT**) were commissioned by **Arts Network** and the **Igen Trust** to evaluate **Arts Network**, a project in South London which offers arts-based opportunities to local people with severe and enduring mental health problems.

## 1.1 ABOUT THE CONVERGE EVALUATION AND RESEARCH TEAM: INSIGHT THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The **Converge** Evaluation and Research Team (**CERT**) is a team of people **with lived experience of mental health difficulties** based at **York St John University**.

Alongside University academics, **CERT** is able to offer bespoke evaluation of mental health services or community projects, using research techniques including interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. Using inventive approaches, the team specialise in finding ways to support people who find it hard to express themselves to take part in evaluations. **CERT** is part of **Converge**, a partnership between **York St John University** and **Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust** delivering educational opportunities to adults who use mental health services in York and the surrounding area. More details can be found here: [www.yorksja.ac.uk/Converge](http://www.yorksja.ac.uk/Converge)

## 1.2 ABOUT ARTS NETWORK

**Arts Network** is a charity that provides an **inspirational and understanding environment** for people with mental health support needs, and challenges the stigma of mental health.

**Arts Network** provides a supportive welcoming space for participants to **explore their creativity, socialise and feel part of the community**. The service is free and particularly focuses on including those who are isolated and have little or no resources or support. Frequently, members experience considerable difficulties in their activities of daily living, sustaining relationships, and undertaking work.

**Arts Network** supports people to **achieve their personal goals through** creative activities, exhibitions, and events that enable participants to **learn new skills, increase self-confidence, and develop relationships**.

**Arts Network** continually seeks to **develop creative ways of responding to members' needs**. The activities are delivered in a supported, friendly and non-clinical environment, where members attend to create, connect and have fun, rather than be assessed.

**Arts Network** members are actively encouraged to **contribute to the running of the organisation**. This includes co-facilitating workshops, assisting at exhibitions, volunteering and taking up positions on our Board of Trustees.

### 1.3 ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

CERT were commissioned **Arts Network** and the **Igen Trust** to complete an annual evaluation of **Arts Network**. **The aim of this evaluation was to gather the views and opinions of Arts Network members, staff and external partners using participatory research approaches.**

The key difference between this evaluation and previous **CERT** evaluations of **Arts Network** is that this time we involved **Arts Network** members as co-researchers with **CERT** throughout the evaluation process, encouraging them to take the lead as much as was feasible, beginning with designing the evaluation through to analysing the data we collected and drawing conclusions.

## 2. Methods

This year, CERT sought to use participative research methods, **involving Arts Network members as co-researchers** much as possible as in the whole evaluation process (acknowledging barriers to this such as the time available and our distance from London).

We asked **Arts Network** to find roughly **six members** who would be willing to work with us over the course of the evaluation – we expected about four sessions over a two-month period. We were able to offer a £10 voucher for each session they attended.

The group of member co-researchers was varied in gender identity, age and ethnicity. They have also been members for a range of time, from twenty years plus to just one year.

### 2.1 INITIAL PLANNING SESSION (FIRST VISIT)

Two CERT researchers visited **Arts Network** to meet with members in order to allow them to **directly influence our evaluation methodology from the beginning**. Six member co-researchers and two CERT researchers attended this session. One member of **Arts Network** staff was present.

We began by discussing these three questions/tasks with the members:

- Why do people come to **Arts Network**?
- Write three words/phrases which come to mind when you think about **Arts Network**
- What does **Arts Network** do?

See [figure 1](#) for the flip charts documenting this discussion.

#### 2.1.1 Evaluation questions

This collaborative discussion led to the **formulation of three questions** that member co-researchers decided we should consider in our evaluation:

1. What difference does **Arts Network** make to your day?
2. Why is art important to you?
3. What would you say to your younger self about starting **Arts Network**?

#### 2.1.2 Methodology choice

We shared with the group of co-researchers the methodology CERT had used in our previous **Arts Network** evaluations and elsewhere such as interviews and group/individual questionnaires. We also suggested ways in which visual arts and creative writing might be used as a research method.

Figure 1: Flip charts from the initial planning session

What difference does AN make to you day?

What would you miss if AN stopped?

What do you have to give up to have - get in a frame of mind to get out of the house

How to use the studio space?

Reasons to come?

How does AN make you feel?

What does AN get from the studio?

What do you do in the studio?

People's reaction

How has AN changed over the years?

Why is it important?

Does it matter for you? For other people?

What questions should be asked?

How people - how much more do you feel about things when didn't help - how much it working

How to help new members

Structure of things when their experience of AN

Focus  
Stability  
Community

Fun  
Creative  
family

Supportive  
Curiosity  
Inclusive

Calming atmosphere  
Safe place

Good time  
the world  
people

3 WORDS

Appreciate - different things to different people - unique but part of a network

Challenge  
therapeutic

Shared experiences (has rhythm)

Feel safe to make mistakes

Encouragement - just go for it & make mistakes - everyone makes mistakes - non-judgemental

A/HS Network  
like live → Zoom  
visit our all part of the family - not just the studio

AN evolves - response to Covid  
Magazine - new people look forward to it coming

Enjoyment  
Learn something new  
Lift my mood  
Staff are very supportive & can tell when you're having a good time - patience

Confidence - feel better in your life  
Stability  
Safe space  
Creative opportunities  
Privacy  
Place to do art  
Feel relaxed & comfortable

Why Come

to meet people  
to understand other people  
Socialising  
mutual respect  
a family  
Community  
You don't have to do anything - can just come and sit

Structure to do workshops and trips  
to distance from things  
On incentive to do something  
Motivating  
takes your mind off things  
opportunities to learn  
helps deal with emotional processing  
feel inspired and heard  
Lift your spirit

non-judgemental

Variable  
trips out  
Value, respect recognition  
What does AN do?  
Facilitated classes  
Holistic approach  
You can do what you want (that is better)

Make adults to do art  
Make an agency  
Can change your mind about what you do - staff support it

Workshop or open gallery - exhibitions

Brings people from all different places together - they need to see each other - art brings people together

Learn from previous People's Day - AN had a tent - part of the broader community

You can do personal projects - you support to develop ideas - next steps

non-judgemental

There were discussions about interviews being problematic for **people who are anxious**, and how questionnaires can be challenging for people who **struggle with reading** or have anxiety about formal documents. We wanted to **offer a range of ways** in which members can be involved in the evaluation.

The members were very **enthusiastic about the idea of using art as an evaluation tool**, and one suggested the **idea of using postcards**. The suggestion was that members would have the opportunity to answer the first two questions on a postcard in any way they wished – for example, drawing, painting or writing. They would stick these on a wall to share with/inspire other members. The member co-researchers also wanted to offer members the opportunity to create a more substantial piece of work if they wished.

The member co-researchers felt that using postcards **made the evaluation more accessible than the traditional methods** of interviewing and questionnaires. This is because it gives members the opportunity to respond to the questions in their own time and at their own speed – it is both accessible and anonymous. The member co-researchers felt that using art to evaluate **Arts Network** fitted well with the ethos and purpose of the organisation.

Members would have the opportunity to complete as many postcards as they wished. Blank postcards were sent to members who access **Arts Network** online.

**Arts Network** requested that we created a **questionnaire to get more specific details** about members' experiences. **CERT** felt this was a useful addition for people who wanted to give a more thorough exploration of their experiences. This meant **members had the choice of responding** to the evaluation using postcards or the questionnaire (or both).

The member co-researchers proposed question 3, *"what would you say to your younger self about starting Arts Network?"* In our session they discussed the idea of giving members the opportunity to record themselves answering this question on an audio recording device. They explained that this could then be edited into a short recording which new members could listen to when they join to reassure them. They suggested that where a member didn't want their voice to be recorded, their words could be spoken by an actor. **CERT** think this is an important and interesting question but answering it adequately was not possible within the time frame we had. **CERT** would be happy to facilitate this as a separate project in future.

## 2.2 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN SESSION (SECOND VISIT)

Arts Network asked us to use a questionnaire to explore member experiences in order to get **clear answers to specific questions which they wanted our report to cover**. Three member co-researchers and three CERT researchers were present.

### 2.2.1 Question choices

To create the questionnaire for this year, we brought both questions we used in last year’s questionnaire and some questions which CERT had created for other similar evaluations to a meeting with the member co-researchers. Three attended this session. We asked them to collectively read through the questions and **decide which ones they thought were most important** and that we should include in our members questionnaire and to **remove those questions they did not like**. Using a sticky wall, they were able to move questions around and to stick questions they did not like ‘in the bin’ – see [figure 2](#).

### 2.2.2 Question format

In addition to discussing question content, we also asked the member co-researchers about how they thought we should present questions.

In the example questionnaire we shared, answer choices used words:

Do you feel more sociable while at Arts Network?	I feel more sociable	No change	I feel less sociable	I'm not sure
Do you feel more sociable while at home?	I feel more sociable	No change	I feel less sociable	I'm not sure

However, the member co-researchers expressed a preference for using numbers rather than words to express the possible range of feelings in this way:

Do you feel more sociable while at Arts Network?	I feel more sociable	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	I feel less sociable	I'm not sure
Do you feel more sociable elsewhere?	I feel more sociable	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	I feel less sociable	I'm not sure

As such, we changed the questions this applied to in this way (however, this was not possible to do on the online version).

### 2.2.3 Shortening the questionnaire

The member co-researchers also helped us **reduce the number of questions**, for example, the following three questions became one question: “do you feel **happier** while **at Arts Network**?”

Do you **worry less** while **at Arts Network**?

Do you feel **more positive** about things while **at Arts Network**?

Do you feel **more content** while **at Arts Network**?

Interestingly, the member co-researchers decided to **remove the question asking about the use of mental health services** – whether there had been a change in how often they saw their care-coordinator (e.g. mental health nurse/social worker/occupational therapist), support worker or psychiatrist; and whether there had been a change in how often they saw their GP, A&E, home treatment or inpatient treatment for their mental health. In previous years, these questions had offered evidence that members thought attending **Arts Network has provided a protective effect on their mental health**, in particular, reducing their self-reported need for emergency care (A&E for mental health reasons; use of crisis/home treatment team; and use of inpatient mental health care). For those which have one, members also have reported seeing their care-coordinator less as a consequence of attending **Arts Network**. The member co-researchers explained that they removed this question because **they felt the frequency of appointments, or the person that they were seeing, doesn't really reflect their actual mental health state** particularly accurately or usefully.

## 2.3 QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS SESSION (THIRD VISIT)

This session was attended by **five member co-researchers and three CERT researchers**. As we had **limited time to discuss questionnaire data**, CERT selected **five questions** which we thought would be interesting and informative:

1. Do you think that **Arts Network** has helped your mental health?
2. [**Social questions**] – the importance of:
  - Meeting up together outside of **Arts Network**/elsewhere (e.g. for coffee)
  - Communicating outside of **Arts Network** (e.g. calling/texting/social media)
  - Looking out for each other (e.g. when unwell)
3. Do you feel more confident while at **Arts Network**/elsewhere?
4. Do you feel more optimistic while at **Arts Network**/elsewhere?
5. Do you feel like you're contributing something at **Arts Network**/elsewhere?

The questionnaire data relating to these questions was shared with those present and there was a collective discussion which was audio-recorded.

## 2.4 POSTCARD THEMATIC ANALYSIS SESSION (FOURTH VISIT)

In this session, the postcards created by members were **discussed collectively by a group of six member co-researchers and three CERT researchers**. The goal was to conduct a **thematic analysis** of the themes which emerged from the postcards. The session began by looking at each postcard in turn and discussing/reflecting on it first individually and then as a group. The next step was to name these emerging themes, and then to group the themes into similar categories. This process is shown in [figures 3-5](#).

## 2.5 INTERVIEWS AND CONTACT WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

CERT researchers interviewed:

1. The workshop leaders and communication and engagement lead.
2. The founder and CEO, Strategic Director and the Programme Manager.

CERT made email contact with:

1. Horniman Museum
2. Artlift

(Attempted contact with Dulwich Picture Gallery, Art Academy and Inspirative Arts).

Figure 3: The postcards created by Arts Network members





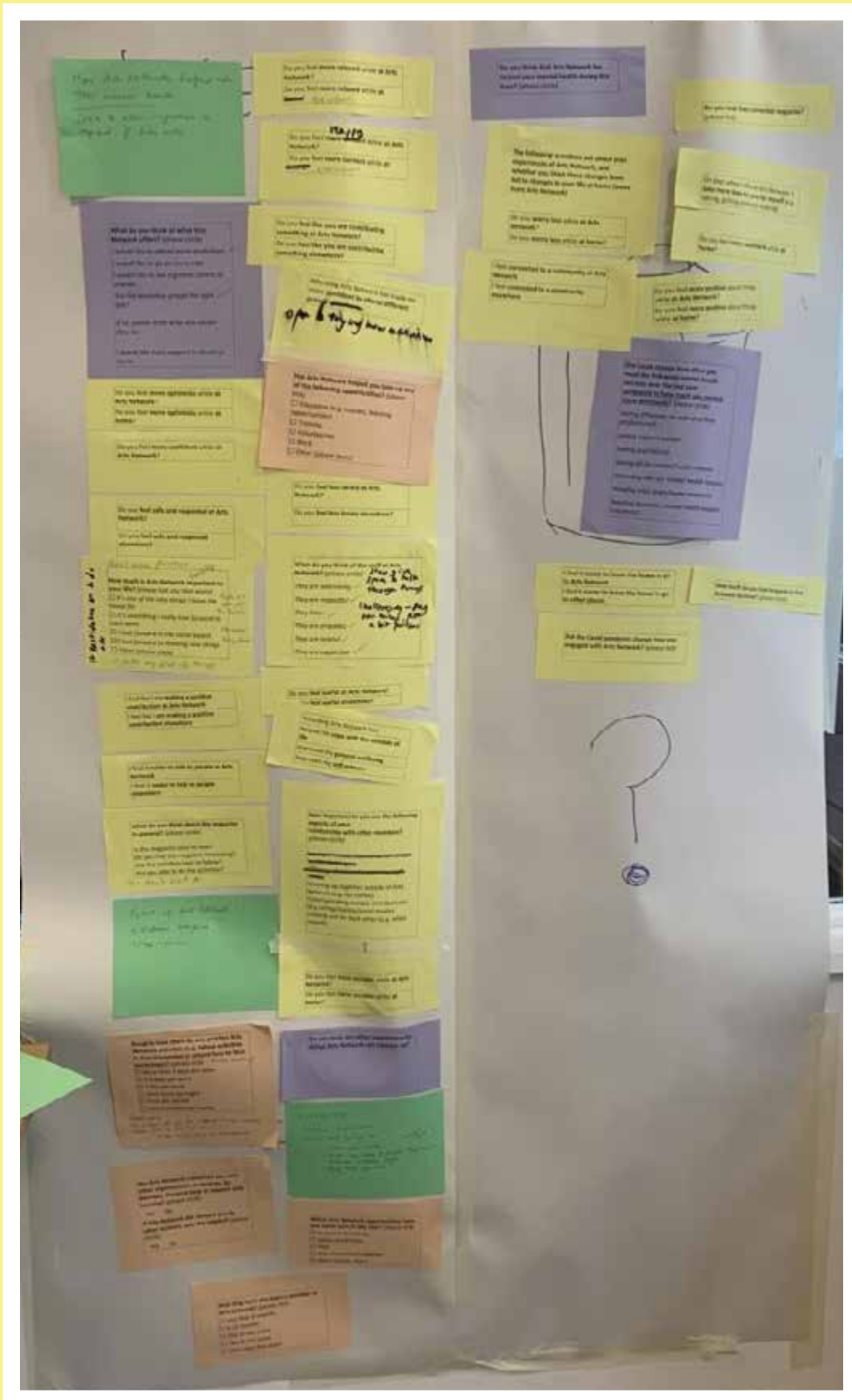


Figure 2: Questionnaire design session



Figure 4: Analysing the postcards

Figure 5: Thematic analysis of the postcards



## 3. Findings

There are currently **121 members actively engaging in programme activity**; and 93 'associate members' who are not currently engaging in workshops, but who receive communications, can attend visits and access any volunteering opportunities. In the past year there were 59 referrals.

### 3.1 POSTCARDS

**Twenty-one postcards** were created by members, plus one more substantial piece of art (front cover). While we initially planned to look at the two questions separately (what difference does **Arts Network** make to your day and why is art important to you?), many of the postcards did not make this distinction so we analysed them together as a whole.

In our postcard evaluation session, the **postcards created by members were discussed collectively by a group of six member co-researchers and three CERT members**. The session began by looking at each postcard in turn and discussing/reflecting on it first individually and then as a group. The next step was to name these emerging themes, and then to group these themes into similar categories (figure 5).

The key themes were:

- 3.1.1 An oasis or sanctuary
- 3.1.2 Playfulness
- 3.1.3 Acceptance and appreciation
- 3.1.4 Transformation
- 3.1.5 Freedom
- 3.1.6 Structure

#### 3.1.1 An oasis or sanctuary

Many member co-researchers spoke of **Arts Network as an oasis or sanctuary** in response to postcards. They used words and phrases such as 'oasis', 'sanctuary', 'room to breathe', 'space', 'relaxation', 'refreshing', and nature-related words (figure 6). One member wrote that "*Arts Network has been a **lifesaver for me and enabled me to meet in a safe setting... regularly with other people.***" Figure 7 reflects this theme very clearly. The artist conveys **Arts Network** as an oasis in an otherwise dull London skyline, a member co-researcher commented "*we love **that splash of colour against the dreary city.***" Another member commented: "*I can **lose myself in art safely at Arts Network.***"

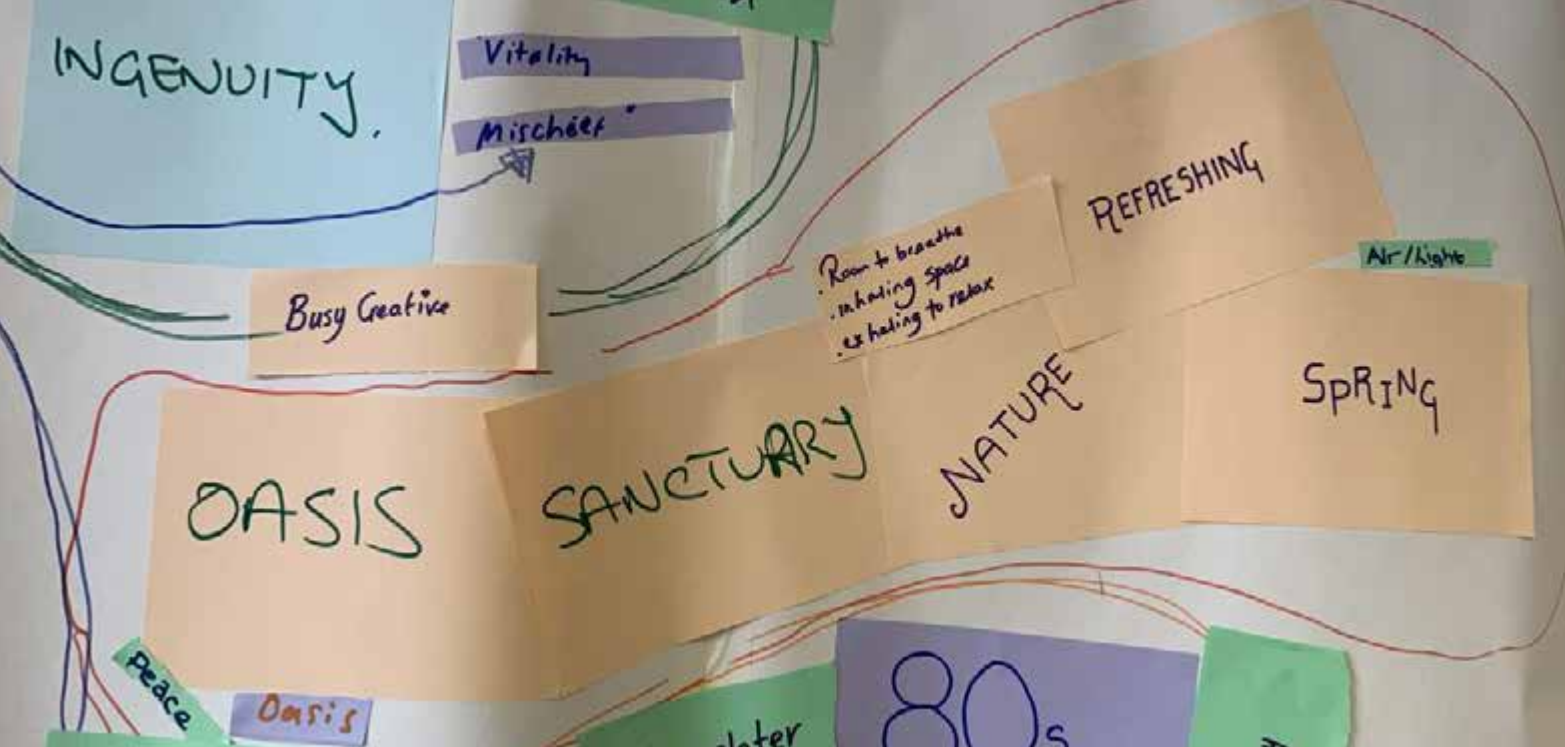


Figure 6: Oasis or sanctuary theme

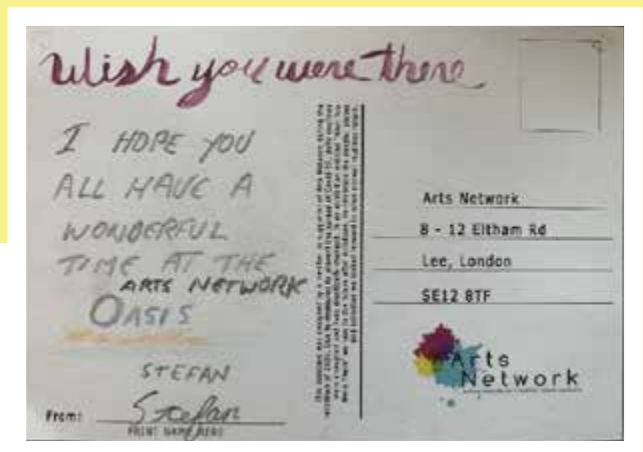


Figure 7: An oasis.  
Postcard text reads:  
"I hope you all have a wonderful time at the Arts Network Oasis"



Similarly, one member wrote how:

*"Arts Network has been a life saver for me and **enabled me to meet in a safe setting...** regularly with other people...it's the degree of consistency that [I] was missing..."*

One member writes of how **Arts Network** cheers them up, and they *"**always leave feeling very happy, I will be lost without Arts Network. They bring sunshine into my day**"* (figure 8).

ARTNETWORK MEANS THE WORLD  
 TO ME, THEY HAVE GIVEN THE  
 CONFIDENCE & PASSION TO CREATE  
 AGAIN. I HAVE LEARNED SO MANY  
 SKILLS WHICH I WILL BE FOREVER  
 THANKFUL. THEY HAVE SUPPORTED  
 MYSELF THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH LOWS  
 AND MY CANCER LAST YEAR,  
 THEY ARE KIND & CARING TEAM  
 (FAMILY) WHILE STILL PROFESSIONAL.

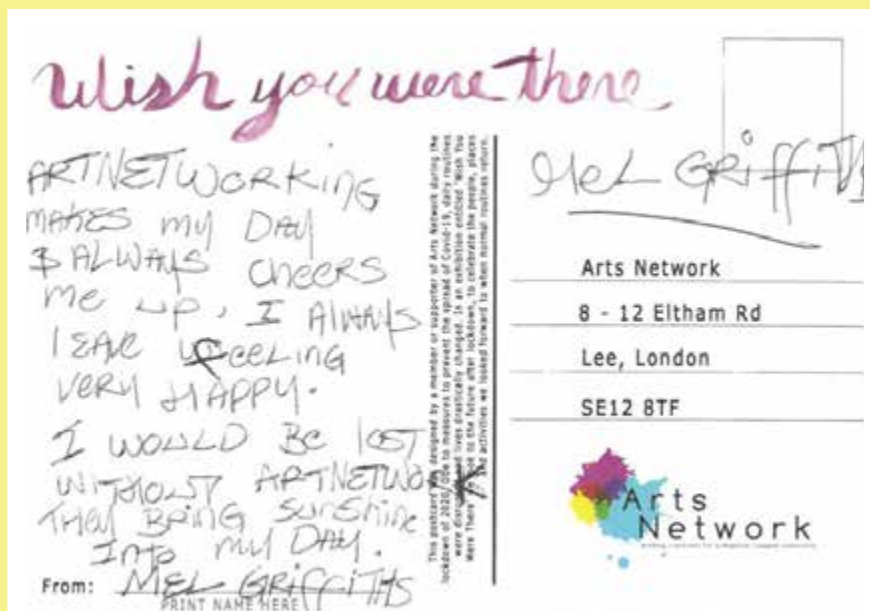


Figure 8: Postcard text reads:

"Arts Network means the world to me. They have given the confidence and passion to create again. I have learned so many skills which I will be forever thankful. They have supported myself through mental health lows and my cancer last year. They are kind and caring team (family) while still professional. Arts Network makes my day and always cheers me up. [I] always leave feeling very happy. I will be lost without Arts Network. They bring sunshine into my day."

The idea of **Arts Network** as a kind of oasis or sanctuary mirrors the impact on members lives discussed in 3.2.3, such as increased happiness, relaxation, sociability, optimism, confidence and feeling safe and respected. At also relates to 3.2.4 where the impact of **Arts Network** on everyday stresses, greater wellbeing and improved self-esteem are discussed.

Figure 9 is another vivid and joyful picture, with the artist expressing how art gives them respite from their mental health challenges. The artist's text reads:

*"[Front] ARTS NETWORK IS MY EVERYTHING. ART TAKES ME Away from my CHAOTIC Head. [Reverse] I love Arts Network. Art [image of a heart], healthy minds, inspired, relieved stress. Keeps me well and supports to reduce crises. Highlight of my week. Helps get me outside when other things don't"*



Figure 9:  
Postcard text reads:

*"[Front] Arts Network IS MY EVERYTHING. ART TAKES Me Away from my C[H]AOTIC Head. [Reverse] I love Arts Network. Art [image of a heart], healthy minds, inspired, relieved stress. Keeps me well and supports to reduce crises. Highlight of my week. Helps get me outside when other things don't"*



Figure 10: Playfulness theme

### 3.1.2 Playfulness

In the group discussion of the postcards with member co-researchers it became clear that a sense of playfulness at **Arts Network** is very important to members. They used words such as 'fun', 'playful', 'laughter', 'joy' and 'mischief' (figure 10). There was a sense that figure 11, "it's like [people] dancing" captured this theme particularly well.

Other comments included:

*"Coming through these doors **makes me smile each time**"*

*"Arts Network always makes my day, it **always cheers me up. I always leave happy.** I would be lost without Arts Network, they bring sunshine into my day."*

Figure 12, a cat, triggered a conversation between the member co-researchers **around cats joining Zoom calls** during lockdown and the entertainment this brings.

When discussing figure 13 (flowers and butterflies) in the analysis session, member co-researchers made reference to 'joy' and 'energy' and how the **playfulness at Arts Network** allowed people to be more creative – the back of the postcard read:

*"I really enjoy coming to Arts Network. I feel that I am able to **free my creativity** and am encouraged to **try new things.** Arts Network truly is a life line."*

Figure 14 is a drawing of a "cupid" type character labelled "stupid". The group felt that this image captured the **playful cheekiness and mischief that happens at Arts Network.**

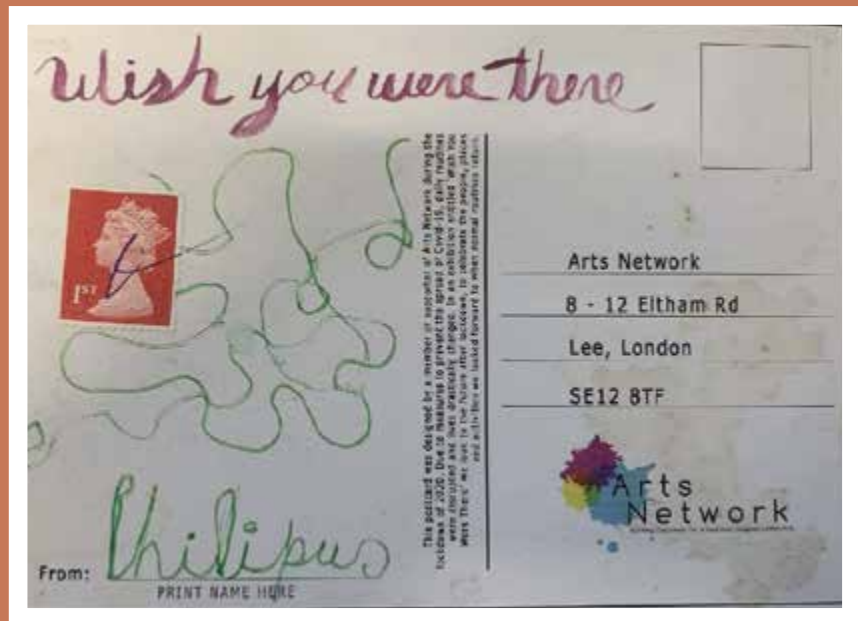


Figure 11: Dancing figures



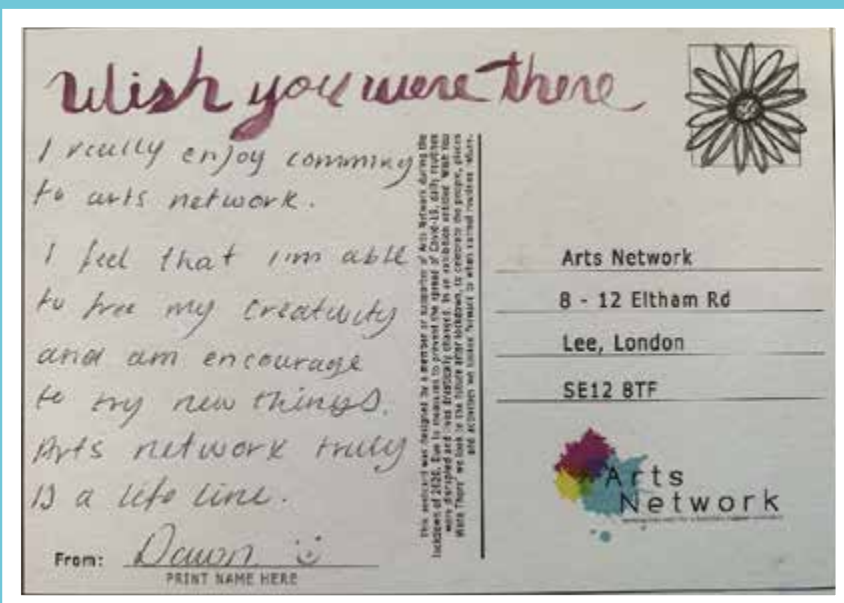




Figure 12:  
A cat



Figure 13: Flowers and butterflies.



Postcard text reads:

"I really enjoy coming to Arts Network. I feel that I am able to free my creativity and am encouraged to try new things. Arts Network truly is a lifeline."

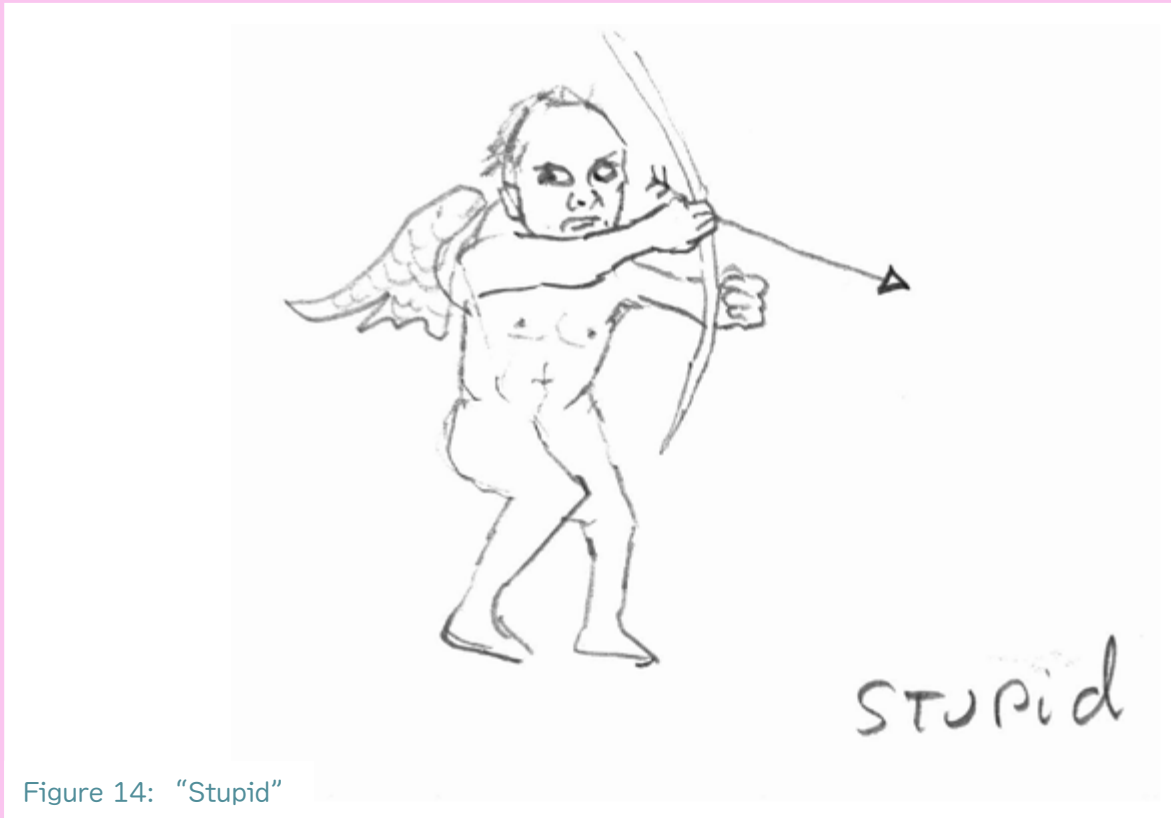


Figure 14: “Stupid”

### 3.1.3 Acceptance and appreciation

‘Acceptance and appreciation’ emerged as a key theme. Member co-researchers used words such as ‘appreciation’, ‘love’, ‘understanding’, ‘openness’ to **express the relationships** they have with other members and with **Arts Network** staff (figure 15).

Member co-researchers described how **Arts Network** has **nurtured a sense of** ‘belonging’; ‘unity’; ‘community’; ‘family’; ‘companionship’; ‘teamwork’; ‘feeling wanted’; ‘togetherness’; and ‘mutuality’.

One member expressed the importance to them of being accepted by other **Arts Network** members:

*“Art for me is a visual expression which enables me to vocalize emotional happenings in my body which would otherwise not take place. **I can recognise all things for other people, see how they struggle and relate to them, and I would like people to relate to me.** To post articulate the imaginings in my mind and heart for myself and that makes the expression valuable for me.”*

*“I struggle [with] a personality disorder and often find group interaction not possible that people are confused by my behaviour. **At Arts Network I found a setting where people have accepted me for who I am [and] all my quirks.**”*



Figure 15: Acceptance and appreciation theme

Figure 16 is a postcard on which a member has chosen to write rather than draw, and articulated the importance to the writer of attending **Arts Network**, and that meeting the group and **having 'a catch up'** is something which they particularly enjoy.

Figure 17 is another postcard on which the member has chosen to write. They expressed the importance to them *"that my beautiful friends are here, staff and members... I feel happy and like I belong here in peace and joy."*

Another drawing, figure 18, depicted a member participating in a Zoom call. The text indicated that this member joined during lockdown, and commented on how they *"meet new people in Arts Network."* In our discussion, some members referred to welcoming new members into the 'family'.

Members were especially drawn to figure 19, a dynamic and energetic drawing of bees and smiling people holding hands. On the reverse, capturing a **sense of acceptance and appreciation**, the artist writes:

*"Dear Arts Network. Arts Network has been supportive, dependable, fun, challenging, entertaining, educational, friendly, uplifting, funny, emotional. Kind, encouraging, stimulating, kept people connected, companionship, encouraging, invigorating, energising, makes me feel less isolated."*

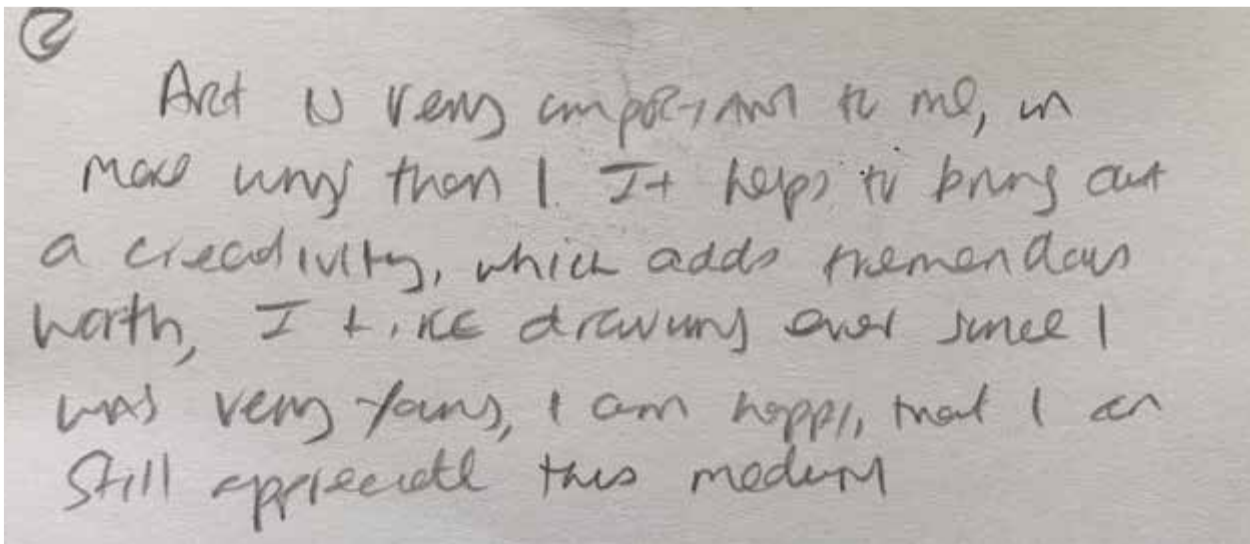
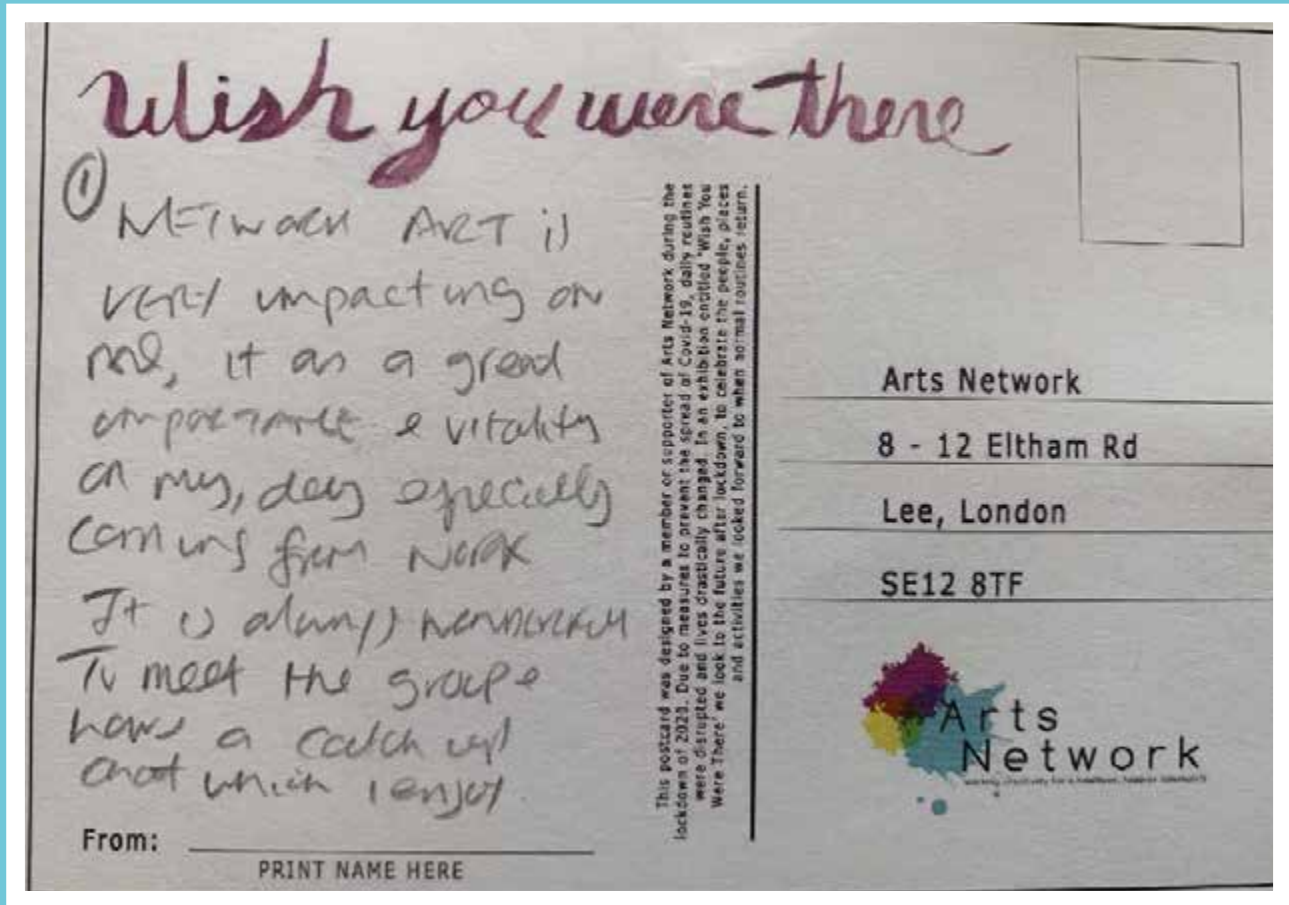


Figure 16: Postcard expressing the importance of being part of the group

Postcard text reads:

"(1) Network Art is very impacting on me, it is a great importance and vitality on my day, especially coming from work. It is always wonderful to meet the group and have a catch-up chat which I enjoy

(2) Art is very important to me in more ways than 1. It helps to bring out my creativity, which adds tremendous worth, I like drawing ever since I was very young, I am happy that I can still appreciate this medium"

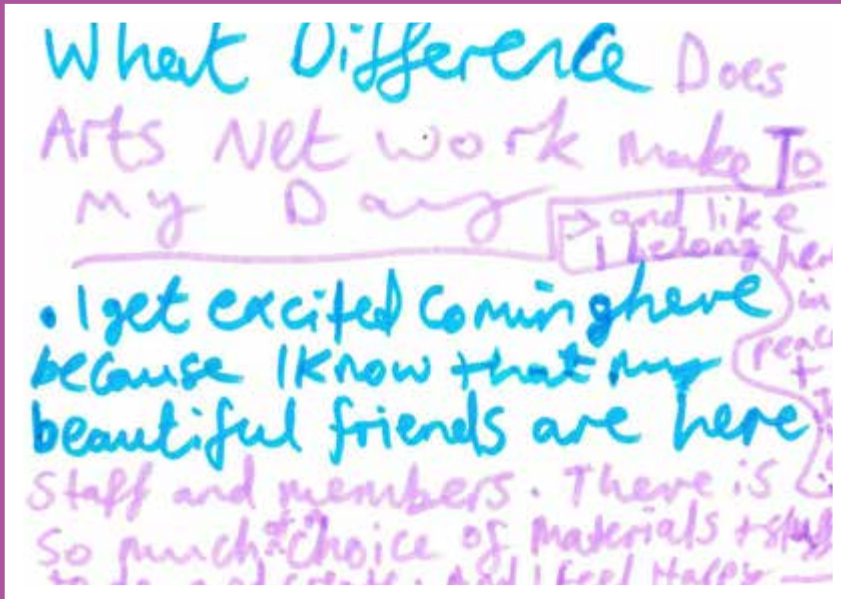


Figure 17:

Postcard text reads:

"What difference does Arts Network make to my day? I get excited coming here because I know that my beautiful friends are here, staff and members. There us so much choice of materials and stuff to do and create. And I feel happy and like I belong here in peace and joy."

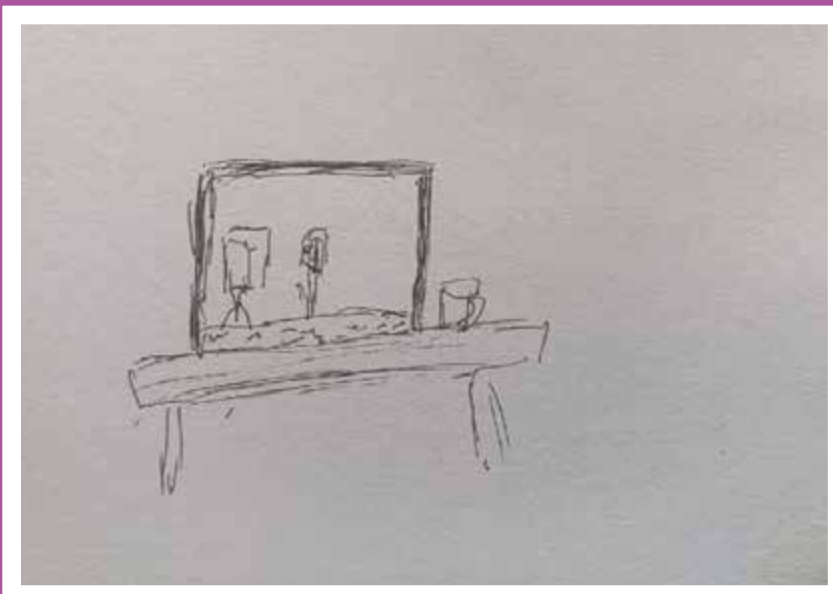


Figure 18:

Participation in a Zoom call

Image: Someone participating in an Arts Network Zoom session from home.

Postcard text reads:

"(1) I was a new member went had three locked down do Zoom, I enjoy is very good. (2) I meet new people in Art Network"

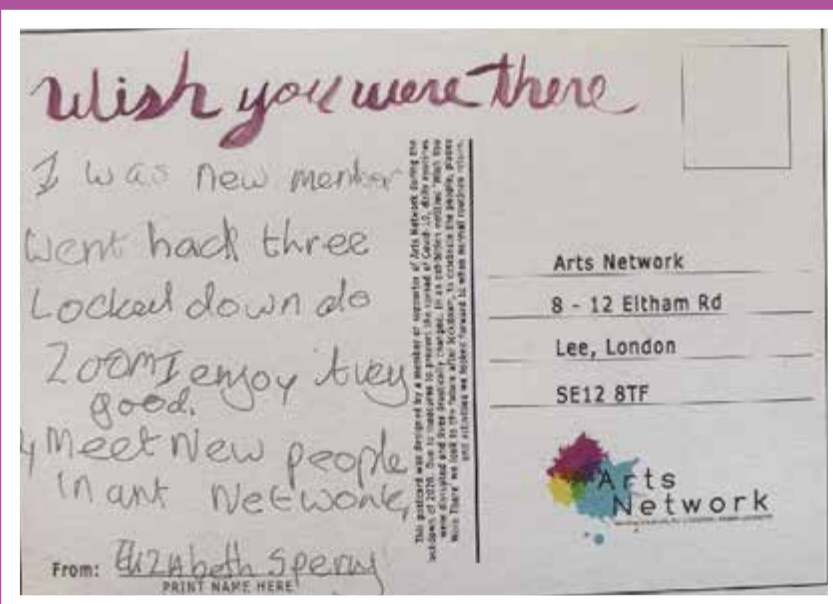




Figure 19:

Postcard text reads:

"Dear Arts Network. Arts Network has been supportive, dependable, fun, challenging, entertaining, educational, friendly, uplifting, funny, emotional. Kind, encouraging, stimulating, kept people connected, companionship, encouraging, invigorating, energising, makes me feel less isolated."

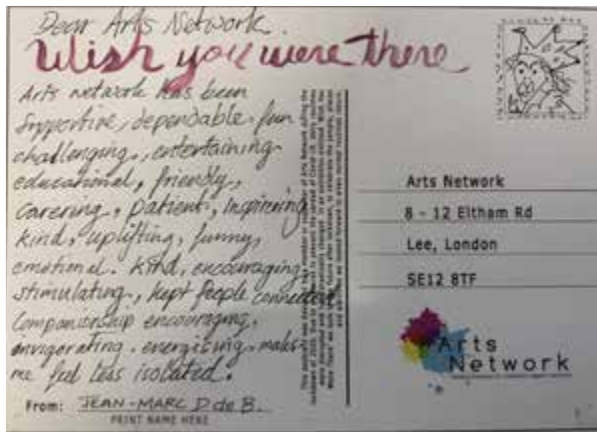


Figure 21: Postcard expressing freedom from judgement, inclusion and safety

Text reads:

"(1) AN brights my day cause I'm free here without judgement; (2) <inclusion> Feel safe and creative. <thank you>"

AN => ART NETWORK

① AN brights my day cause I'm free here without judgement

② <inclusion> Feel safe and creative. => Thank You >

Another postcard, [figure 20](#), is a particularly vibrant pen drawing of a butterfly. The text written over the pen reads:

*"My friends, **thank you for opening your doors for me.** Coming through these doors makes me smile most of the time. I appreciate your determination in showing me that I can do it. ARTNETWORK a door to take off the load. Thank you Art Network."*

This reiterates the theme of being **welcomed and accepted** into the **Arts Network** community.

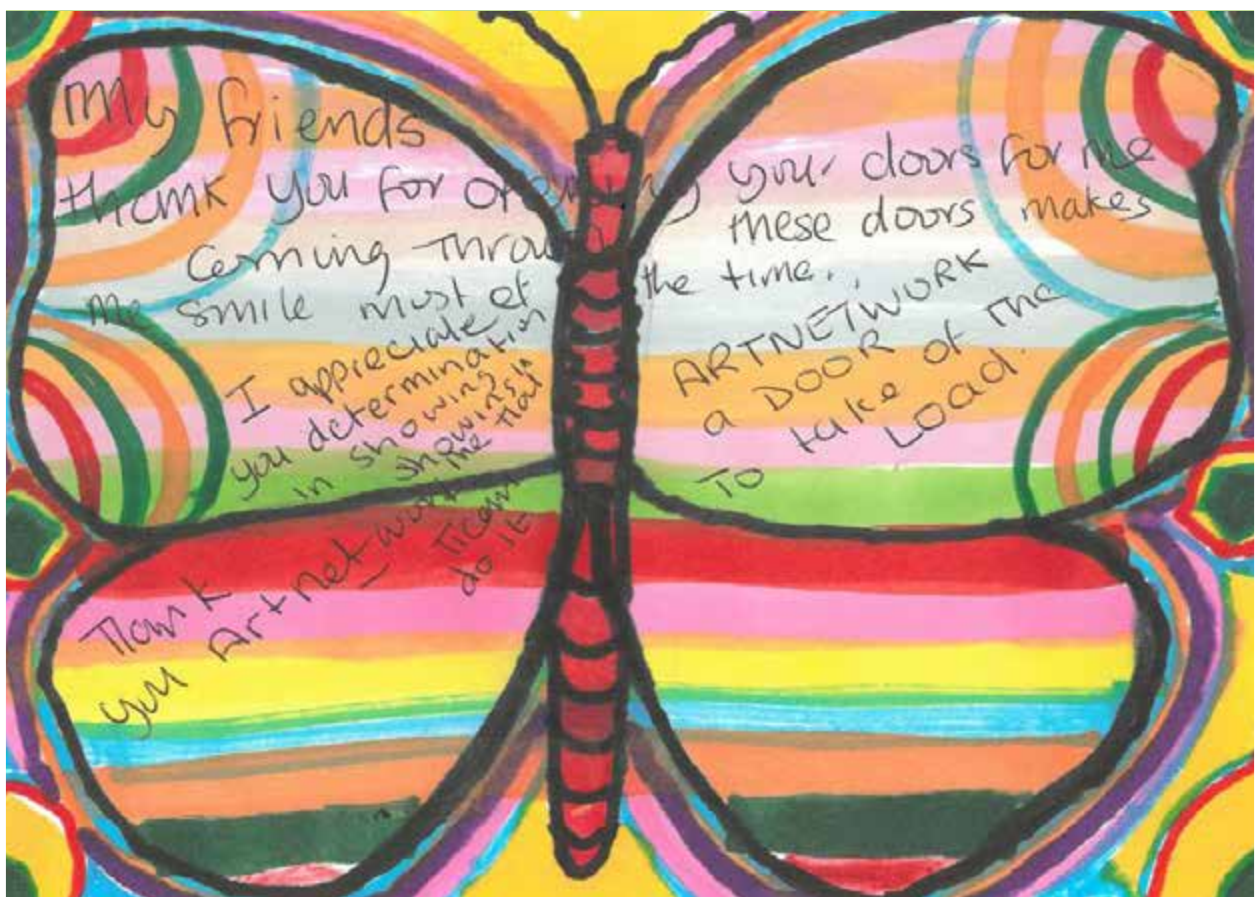
Lastly for this theme, [figure 21](#) is a written postcard, and expresses the importance to the artist of freedom from judgement, inclusion, safety and creativity.

The number of postcards which have been included in this theme (six of a total 21 created) perhaps emphasises the **importance of acceptance and appreciation** to the experience of members at **Arts Network**.

Figure 20:

Postcard text reads:

"My friends, thank you for opening your doors for me. Coming through these doors makes me smile most of the time. I appreciate your determination in showing me that I can do it. ARTNETWORK a door to take off the load. Thank you Art Network."



### 3.1.4 Transformation

Figure 22 shows that member co-researchers used words such as 'journey'; 'transformative'; and 'metamorphosis'. They described how Arts Network had led to transformation in their lives:

*"Arts Network means the world to me. They've **given me the confidence and passion to create again**. I've learned so many skills which I will be forever thankful."*

One member commented on how Arts Network had **transformed them** by bringing out their creativity (Figure 16):

*"Arts Network is important to me in more ways than one. It **helps bring out my creativity** which adds **tremendous worth**. I like drawing ever since I was young, and I'm happy that I can still appreciate this medium."*

One member co-researcher described how prior to Arts Network their knowledge of art was very poor, expressing a transformation of their knowledge and skills:

*"When I first came to Arts Network, **I didn't even know there were different types of pencils...**I had never done any art other than what I did when I was working in nurseries...I tried to do some Koi fish...I used a lot of tracing and stuff to do it... I remember working with pastels to create movement in the water...**I remember feeling excited** like I can't wait to get in and continue ...and **I hadn't felt like that about anything for a long time.**"*

Figure 22: Transformation theme

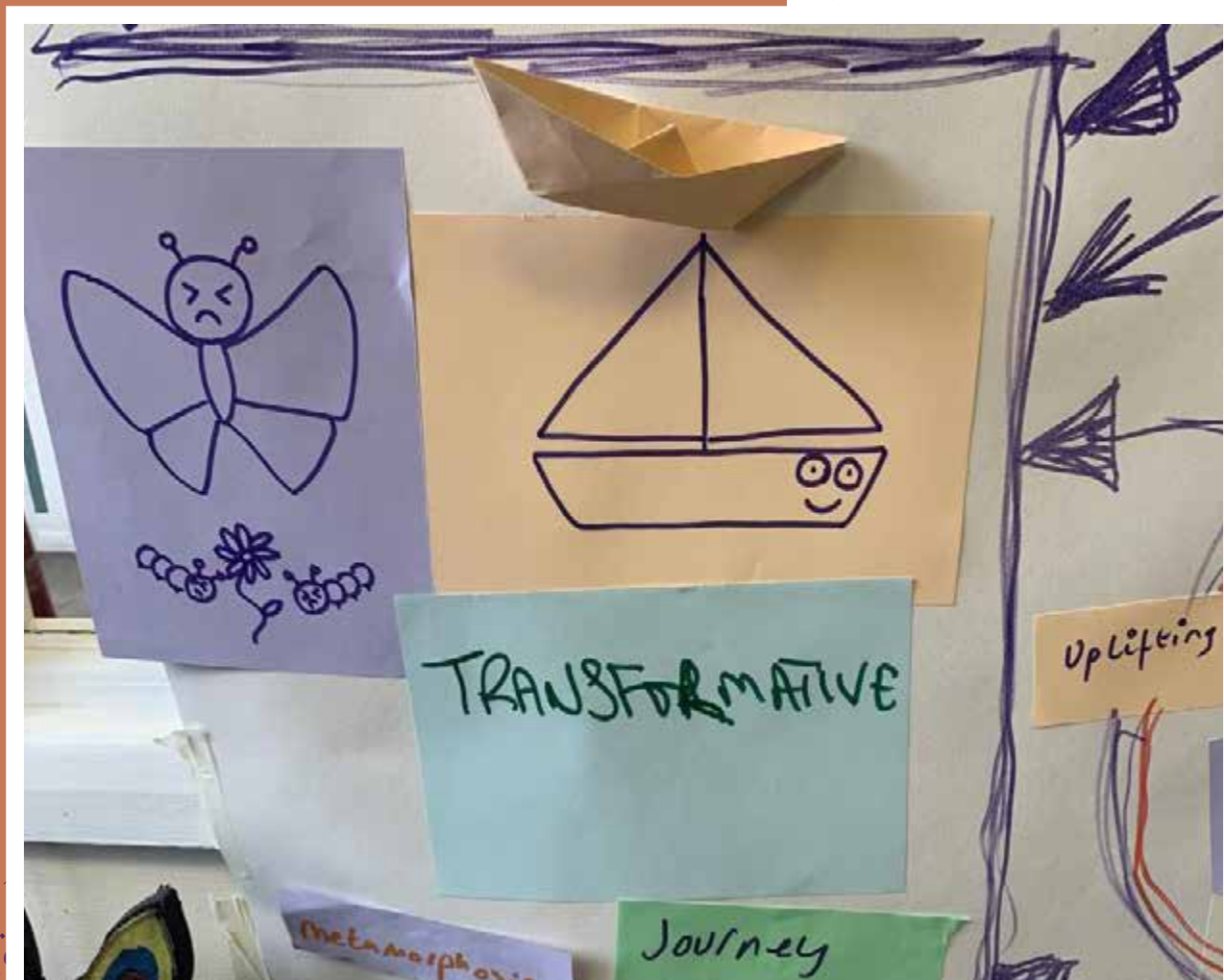




Figure 23 is a playful drawing of a house and tree with the text “Art cleans my brain. I have a reason to leave my home.” A member co-researcher made this comment about this image:

*“I’m drawn to this one. It says ‘I have a reason to leave my home, art cleans my brain’...I liked the bit where it says ‘art cleans my brain’ because **I’m realising that art is not just drawing, it’s in words...it’s a reason to leave home.**”*

### 3.1.5 Freedom

Member co-researchers talked extensively about the **importance of freedom and ‘chaos’** at Arts Network (figure 24). They used phrases such as ‘freedom to try’, ‘freedom to be oneself’, ‘freedom from restrictive attitudes about art and abilities’, ‘flexible’, ‘fresh, bright ideas’, ‘colourful’, ‘flyaway’. One member commented:

*“Why is art important? It makes me feel good and **I feel it is important to be creative.** It gives me a sense of purpose and freedom.”*

The artist who wrote the text on the postcard figure 16 explained:

*“Art is very **important to me in more ways than 1.** It helps to bring out my creativity, which adds tremendous worth, I like drawing ever since I was very young, I am happy that I can still appreciate this medium.”*



Figure 23: "Art cleans my brain. I have a reason to leave my home"

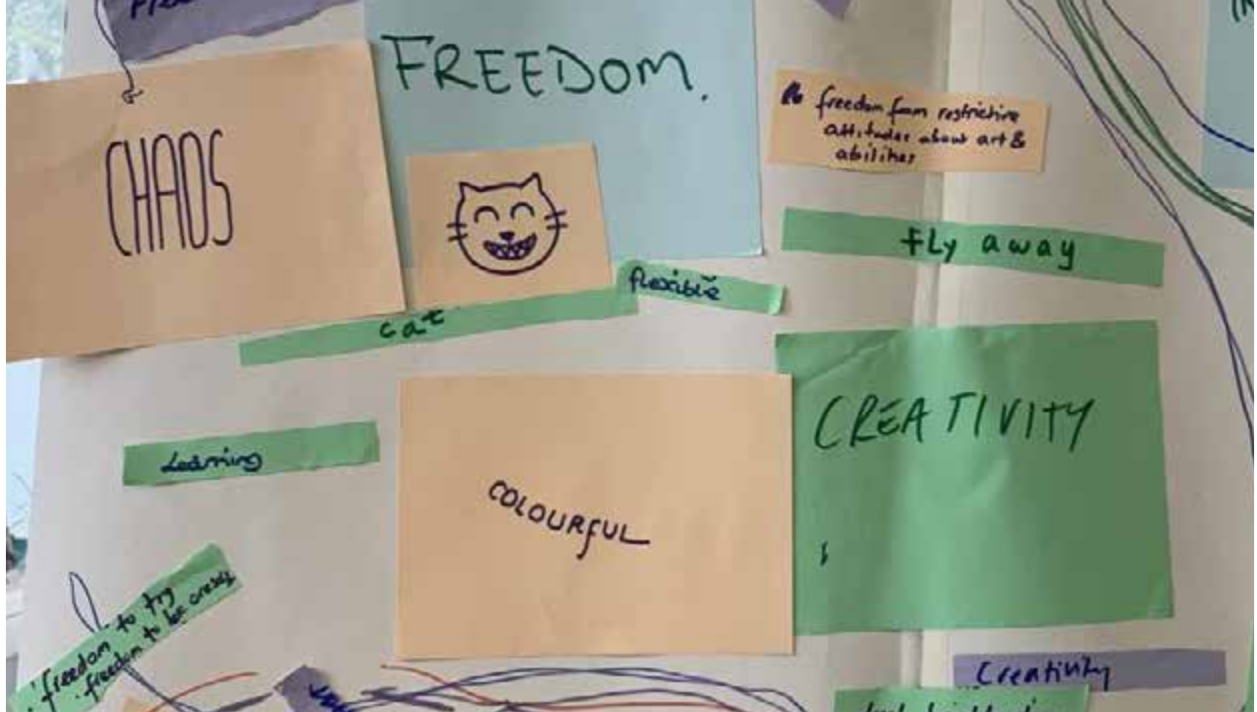


Figure 24: Freedom theme

Figure 21, a written postcard, expressed the importance to the member of being **"free here without judgement."**

Another member co-researcher expressed how going to **Arts Network** gave them freedom from their problems in the outside world – captured by figure 25, a pencil drawing of an artist working with clay. The text reads **"leave problems outside artwork, enjoy everything I do."**

Figure 25:

Postcard text reads:

"(1) Leave problems outside artwork, enjoy everything I do. (2) Sometime Arts Network do task with staff. She was able to bring art work in to do."



### 3.1.6 Structure

The final theme which emerged was to do with **Arts Network offering people structure** in their lives. It was described as 'structured'; 'reliable'; offering 'consistency'; order; and 'grounding', offering a 'lifeline' (figure 26). For people who are unable to work due to their mental health, they can sometimes find it difficult to structure their lives. Here, attending one or two workshops in a week can **offer a way of creating a routine**.

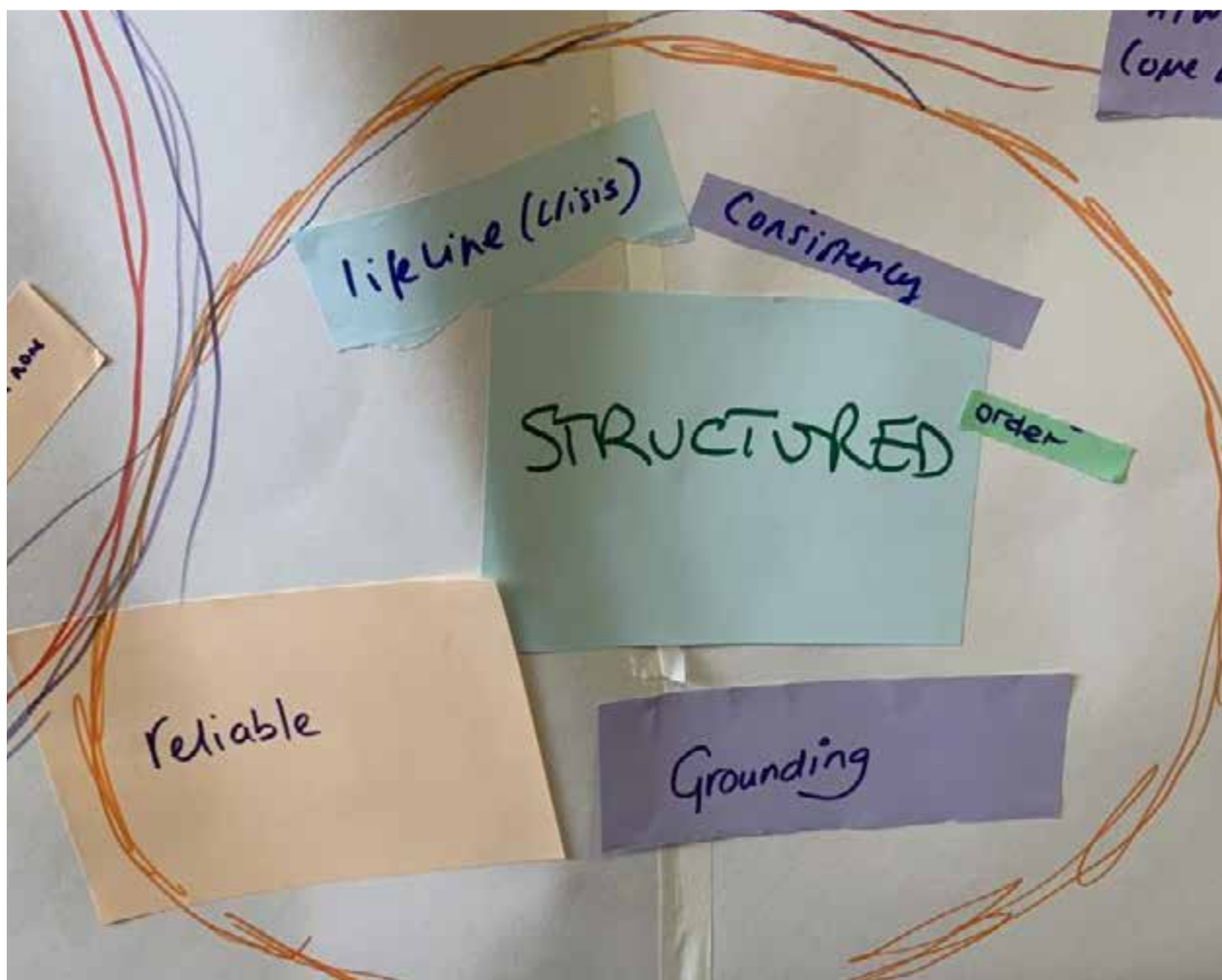
One member wrote

*"Arts Network has been a lifesaver for me and enabled me **to meet in a safe setting ... regularly with other people** is what about the **degree of consistency** that after my stroke was missing."*

Figure 27 is a cheerful image which includes a rainbow, flowers and butterflies. The member co-researchers felt that: *"in the picture butterflies symbolise happiness as well as the rainbow"*. The text on the back of the postcard read:

*"it **makes my day better** as it gives me something... **it gives me structure**, allows me to be more creative and feel connected."*

Figure 26: Structure theme



A postcard already discussed, [figure 9](#), is another vivid and joyful picture, expressing how art gives them **respite from their mental health challenges** and is the **“highlight of their week** which gets them out of their house. The artist’s text reads:

*“[Front] ARTS NETWORK IS MY EVERYTHING. **ART TAKES Me Away from my C[H] AOTIC Head.** [Reverse] I love Arts Network. Art [image of a heart], healthy minds, inspired, relieved stress. Keeps me well and supports to reduce crises. **Highlight of my week.** Helps get me outside when other things don’t”*

The restrictions during the pandemic lockdowns caused **disruption to the lives of many people**. [Figure 28](#) is a playful image of what seems to be a smiling Corona Virus with the text *“thank you Arts Network”* on the front. The reverse comments on how important this artist found the Zoom workshops during lockdown in terms of providing a structure and routine: *“The **Zooms have always been regular and have never let us down.** They have broken up some very long weeks. **They have given routine to my life.** Thank you.”*

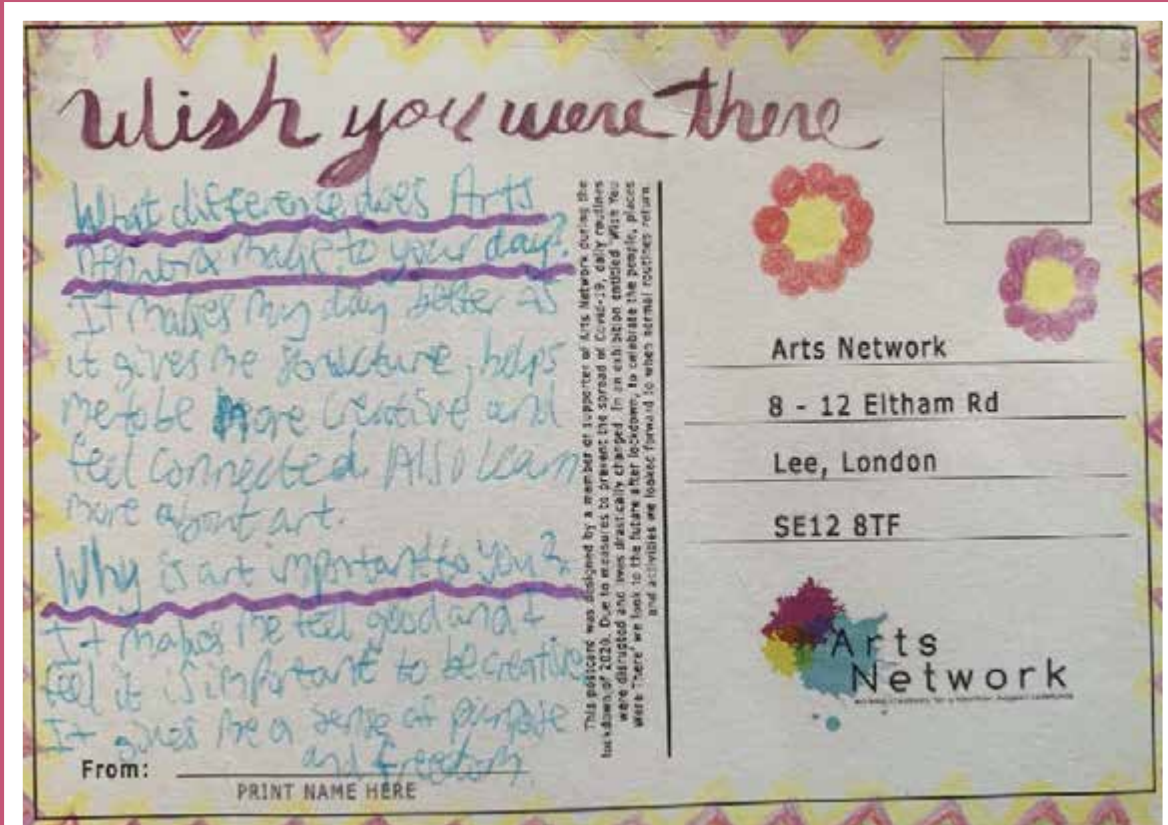


Figure 27:

"What difference does Arts Network make to your day? It makes my day better as it gives me structure, helps me to be more creative and feel connected. Also learn about art. Why is art important to you? It makes me feel good and I feel it is important to be creative. It gives a sense of purpose and freedom."

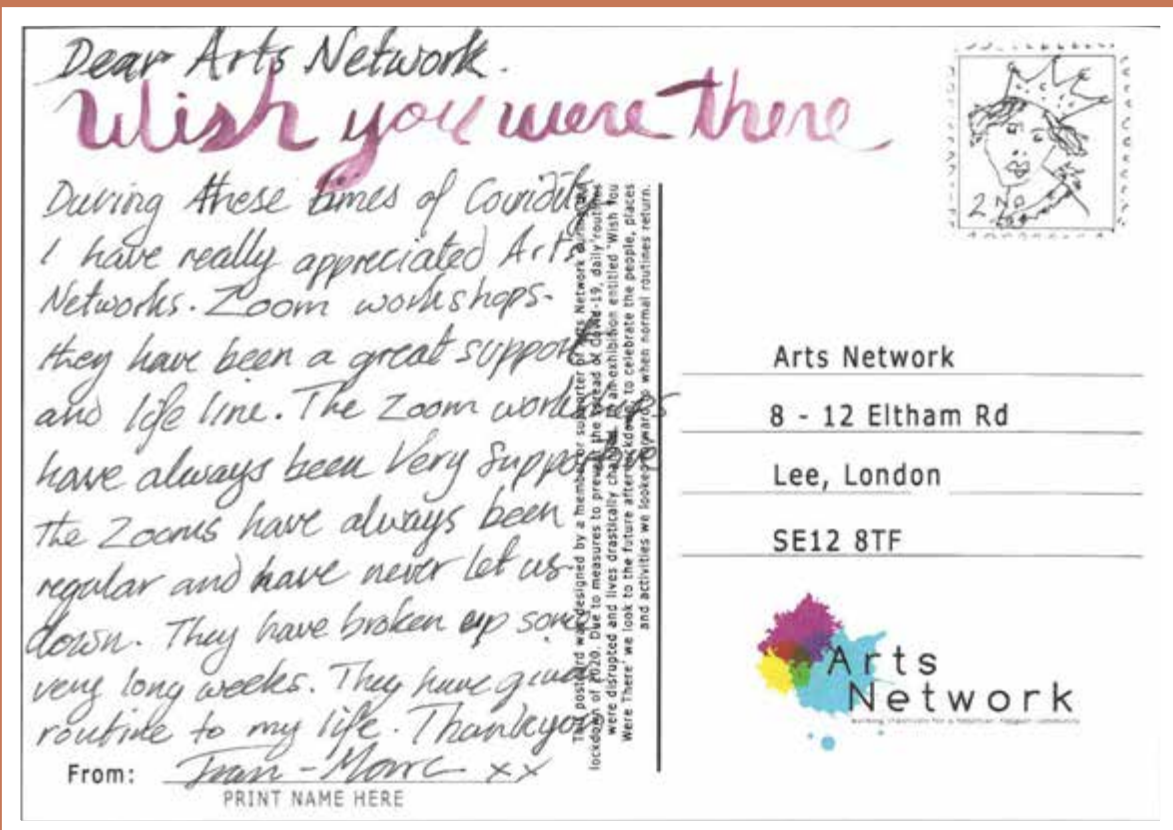
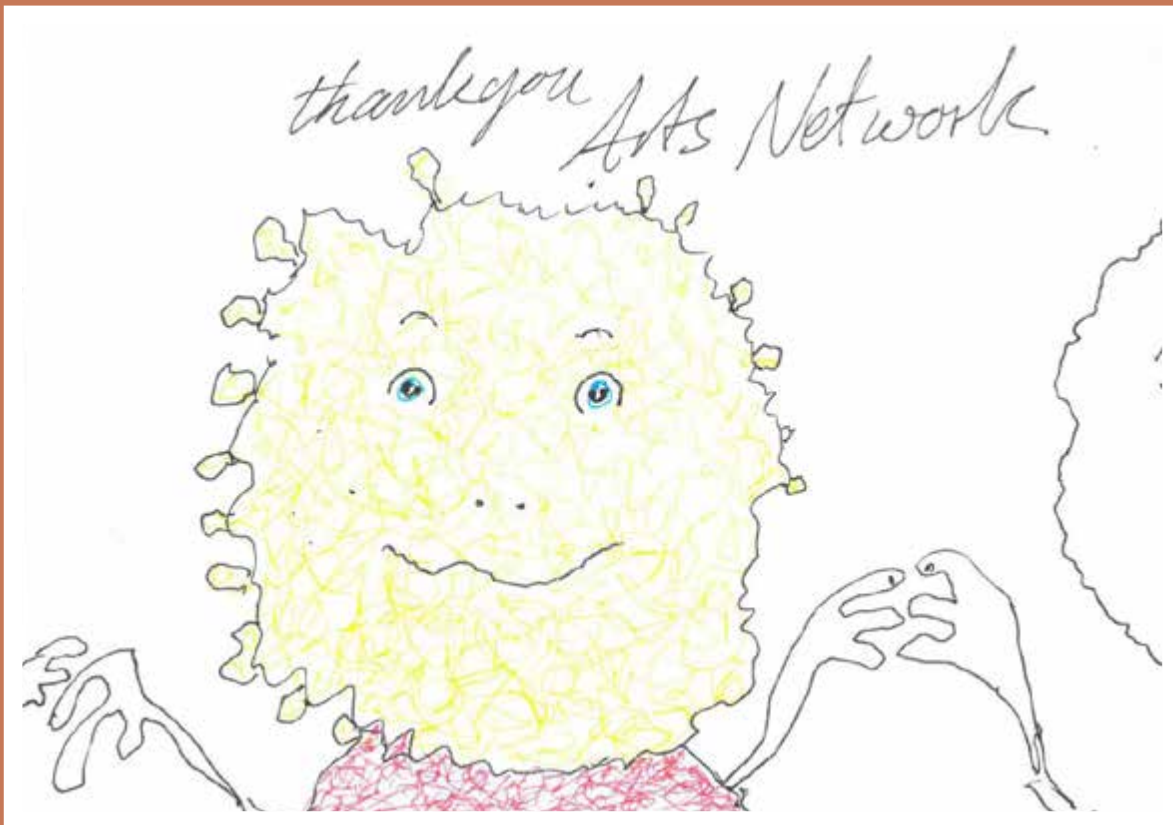


Figure 28:

"Dear Arts Network. During these times of covidity I have really appreciated Arts Network' s Zoom workshops. They have been a great support and lifeline. The Zoom workshops have been very supportive. The Zooms have always been regular and have never let us down. They have broken up some very long weeks. They have given routine to my life. Thank you."

## 3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

We had a total of **18 completed questionnaires** (12 online responses and 6 paper forms). This was lower than last year's total (32), but due to delays in beginning the project there was only a window of two weeks for members to complete it (in comparison to roughly a month last year).

The questions which were discussed with the member co-researchers are presented first.

### 3.2.1 Arts Network and mental health

In all of our previous evaluations, **CERT have identified that Arts Network brings particular benefit to its members' mental health** – in particular during the pandemic lockdown. This was found to be the case again this year. [Figure 29](#) shows that almost all respondents felt that **Arts Network had made their mental health much better or a bit better**. It is possible that the reasons for this lie in responses to the questions around the impact of **Arts Network** on their lives discussed later: increased happiness; greater feelings of relaxation; reduced feelings of loneliness; increased sociability, optimism and confidence; finding it easier to talk to people; feeling useful; feeling like you are contributing to something; and feeling safe and respected.

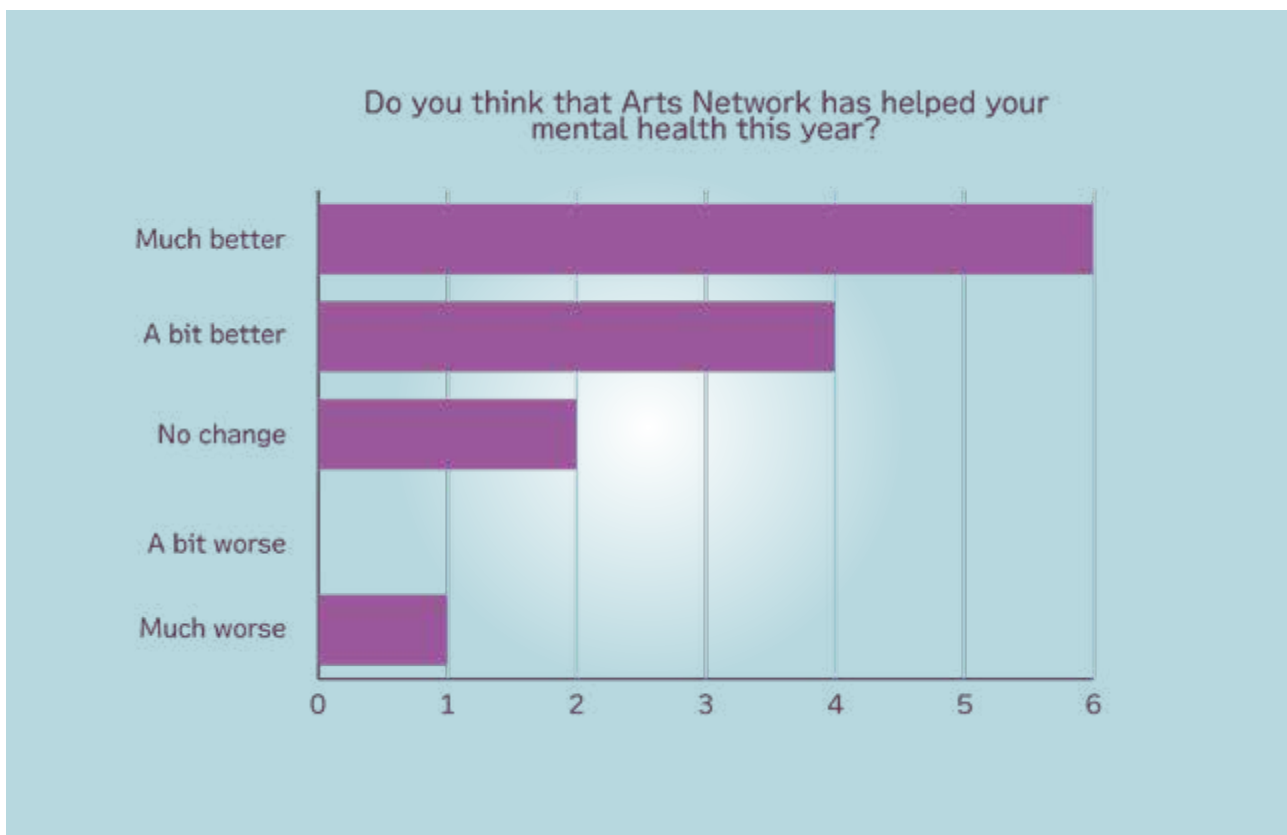


Figure 29: Do you think that Arts Network has helped your mental health this year?

These findings are further illustrated by the comments members made in the questionnaire:

*"[Arts Network] **lifts my spirits** and I become more confident and sociable."*

*"[Arts Network] has always helped to **rehabilitate my mental health problems.**"*

*"I was on the verge of suicide when I joined and I truly credit Arts Network with **saving my life.**"*

*"Attending Arts Network gives me a **sense of well-being and a sense of community.**"*

One member wrote that the benefit to their mental health was **a long-term process**, over several years:

*"Arts Network has **played a remarkable part of my life** which I really appreciate. My mental health wellbeing has been steady over the years. Coming to Arts Network especially [unreadable] adds that extra vitality for the week."*

We discussed the impact of **Arts Network** on mental health with our member co-researchers in our questionnaire analysis session.

Several member co-researchers identified that because of their mental health challenges, sometimes "**getting to Arts Network can be hard**":

*"**There's things I've done here that I didn't think I would ever do.** Yeah... it's getting here, **but I don't want to leave my house at all** because of my mood, and then when I get here I can't even notice for one or two hours... **at least I came and did something**"*

*"Dealing with the public when you **don't want to leave the house** because of your mood"*

Some member co-researchers explained that there is something special about walking through the door and into the workshop:

*"**See who opens the door...** seeing familiar faces, a sense of continuity"*

*"So, so positive. It helps with anxiety... yeah, when you **walk through the door**"*

*"It doesn't take away everything, but at that moment, as soon as I come in, **it's a kind of safe space**"*

*"There's **relief when you come in...** it takes your mind of everyday life"*



Member co-researchers talked of the **sense of respite** they experience:

*"I feel like I was **breathing**"*

*"**Staff lift you up** when you come in depressed"*

*"Arts Network is a **bit of respite. It's a bit of calmness...** away from that busyness outside"*

One member co-researcher talked about the importance of **mutual experience of mental health**:

*"Today is a day that I think I feel a bit better. Because I saw someone [and we had] a conversation. I don't usually talk that much. **We share different things about our depression.** When we talk to people outside... or whatever... they don't understand. I've lost a lot of friends because of [my mental health]."*

Several member co-researchers expressed fears around this: **"I worry about losing Arts Network."**

In 2021 we asked members whether **Arts Network** had a beneficial impact on their mental health [NB this was shortly after the final lockdown]. That 2021 data indicated that despite members experiencing worse mental health during the lockdowns, **almost all respondents believe that Arts Network has had a beneficial impact on their mental wellbeing during this difficult time**: 50% said it helped a bit with their mental health, and 39% said it helped a lot.

In 2022, 46% said that **Arts Network** had made their **mental health much better**; and 30% said it had made it a bit better.

### 3.2.2 Social aspects of Arts Network

Figure 30 shows the importance of various social aspects of **Arts Network**: meeting up outside; communicating outside; and looking out for each other when not well. It shows that **for some members, these aspects are important**. However, many keep their relationships contained within sessions in the workshop and are not interested in taking them outside.

In our questionnaire analysis session, some member co-researchers articulated how **Arts Network** had led to **long-term, deep friendships**:

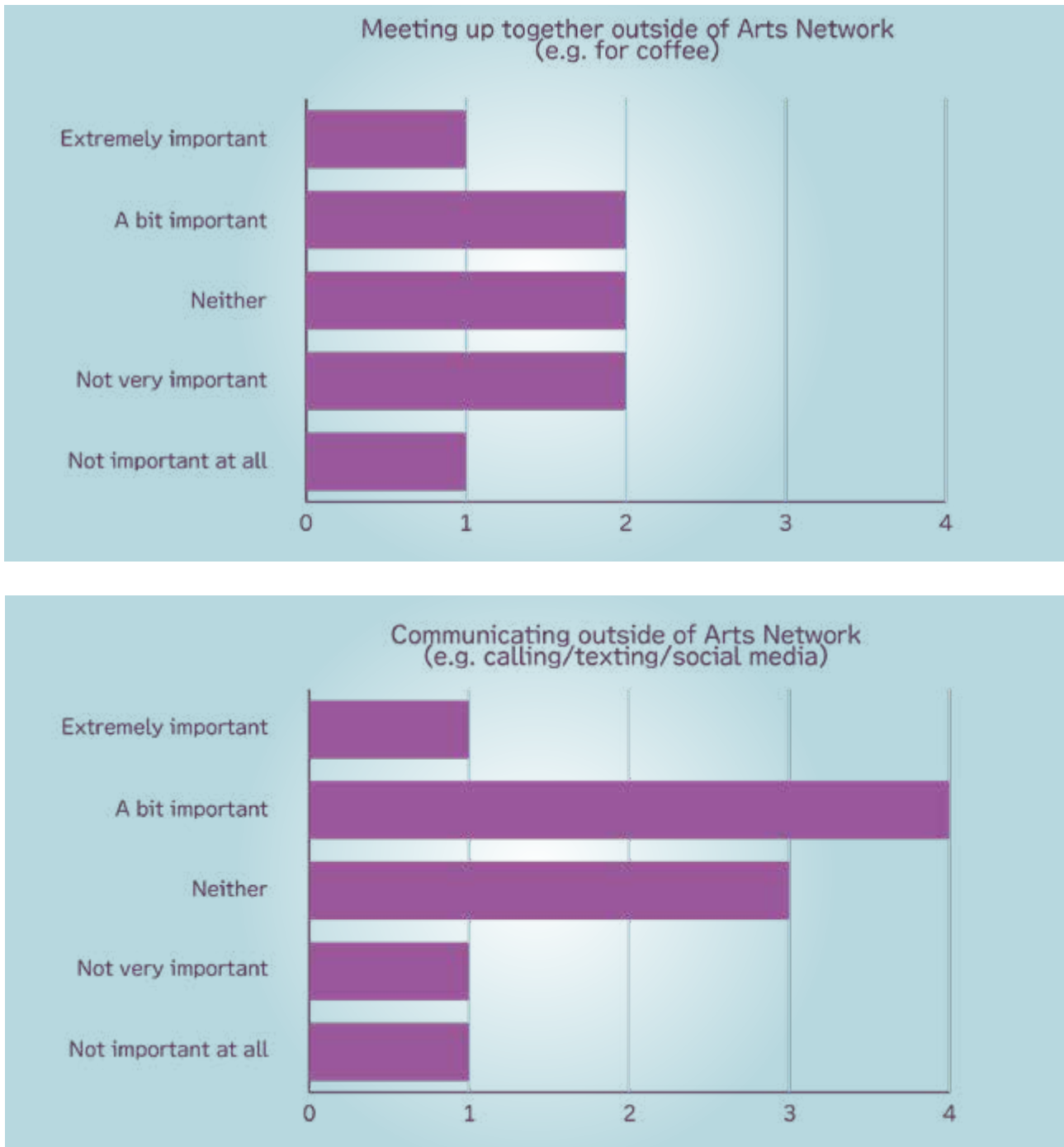


Figure 30 (i-ii)

*"I met a lady here, and we spent **twenty years** together as friends"*

However, one member stated *"I don't make friends"*.

It is interesting that so **many people responded that looking out for each other is either 'not very important' and 'not at all important'**. The reasons for this are unclear. One member co-researcher described how important this was to her:

*"I've **made friends and people that I keep in contact with, sometimes go for a coffee after**. Sometimes you know someone's struggling a bit. Obviously, you don't want to impact in sometimes just have a little chat over a coffee or a cold drink. And sometimes it's just a case of not seeing that person for a couple of weeks. **Just checking in on them. It's sending a text... just to let them know you're thinking of them...** Sometimes you can get into a rut where you've not been in for a while. And then you think, should I come back? You're going to feel a little bit things can change here."*

Some member co-researchers describe the **importance of going on trips to building friendships** with other members:

*"Especially if you go on outings as well... you **get to know people a bit better**"*

*"[It's interesting that you say you get to know people better on the trips] yeah, **because it's a different environment...** you get used to a different environment when you do go on different things that you do outside... **A change of scenery. I think it's quite exciting** when you go on trips or **something to look forward to.**"*

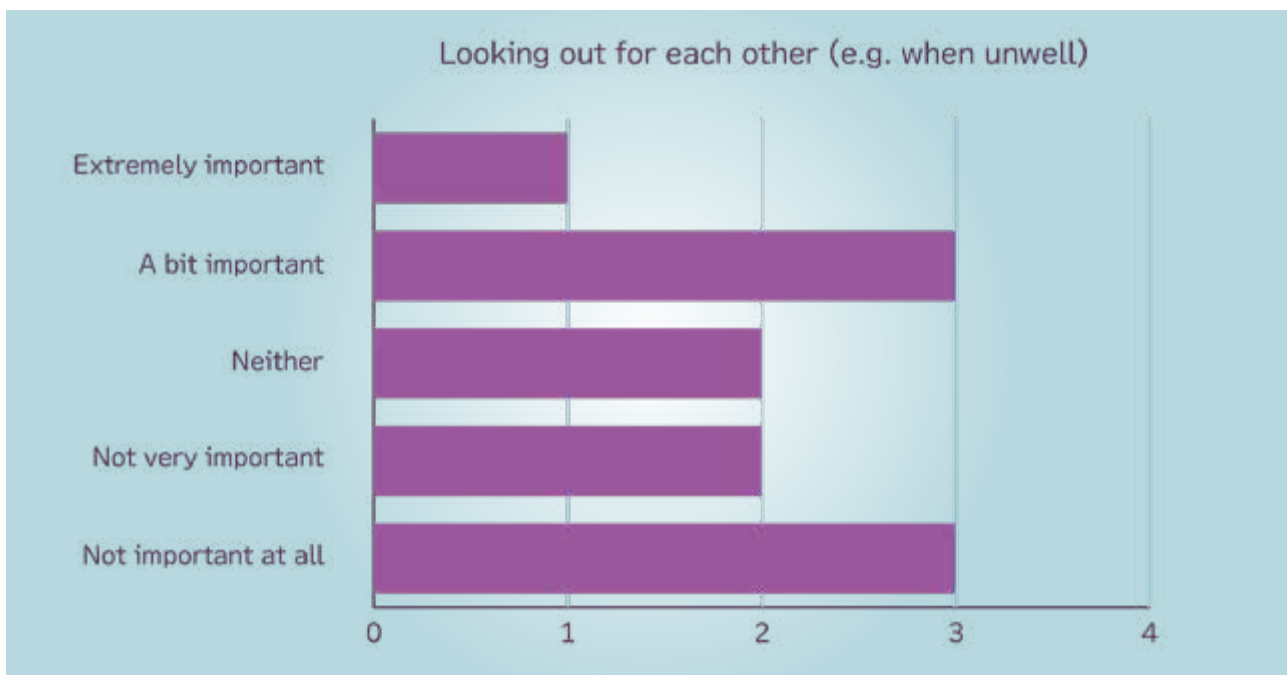


Figure 30 (iii)

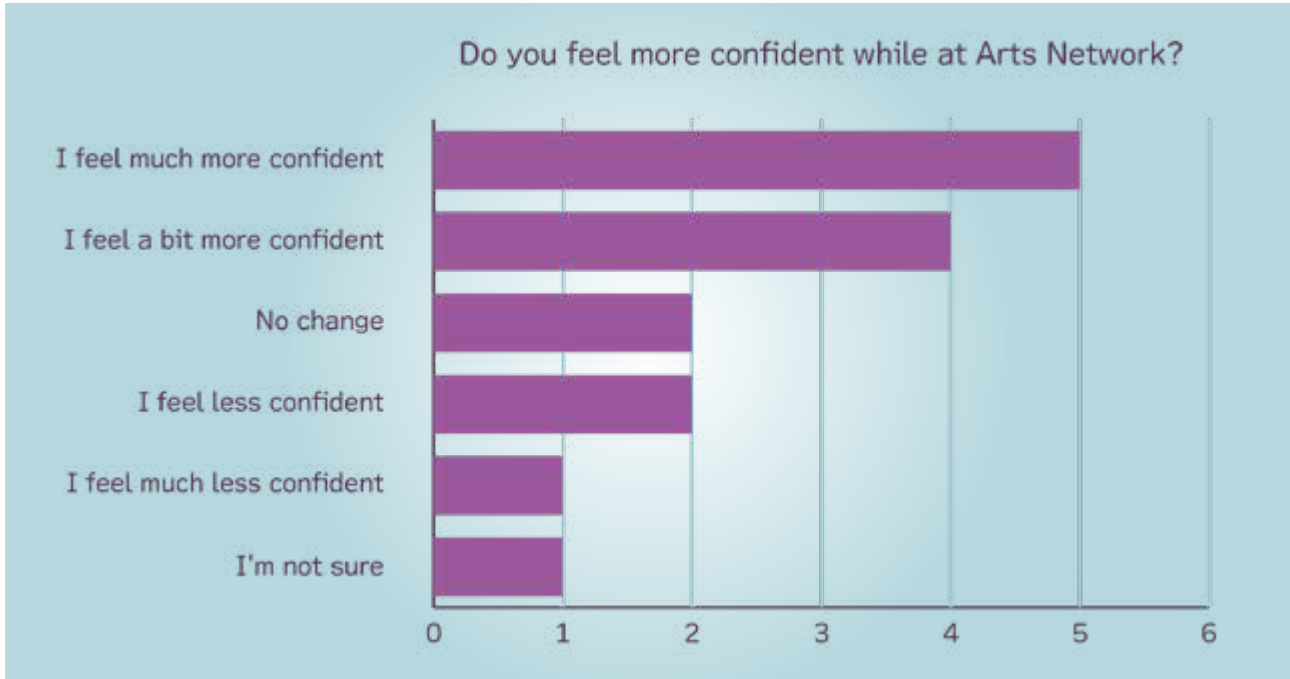


Figure 31 (i): Confidence at Arts Network and elsewhere

### 3.2.3 The impact of Arts Network on your life

#### 3.2.3.1 Confidence

The questionnaire asked about changes in confidence at **Arts Network** and elsewhere (figure 31). The data indicate **that Arts Network increases members' confidence** whilst at **Arts Network**, and for roughly a third, to some extent this increase in confidence this extends elsewhere.

We discussed this data in our questionnaire analysis session. Some **member co-researchers described how the increased confidence at Arts Network extends into their lives elsewhere:**

*"I think when you've learned something when you've come here, how to draw something, it could give me confidence... to **try something somewhere else.**"*

*"It can make you more confident because you gain confidence, doing new things. I certainly **can apply that to elsewhere.**"*

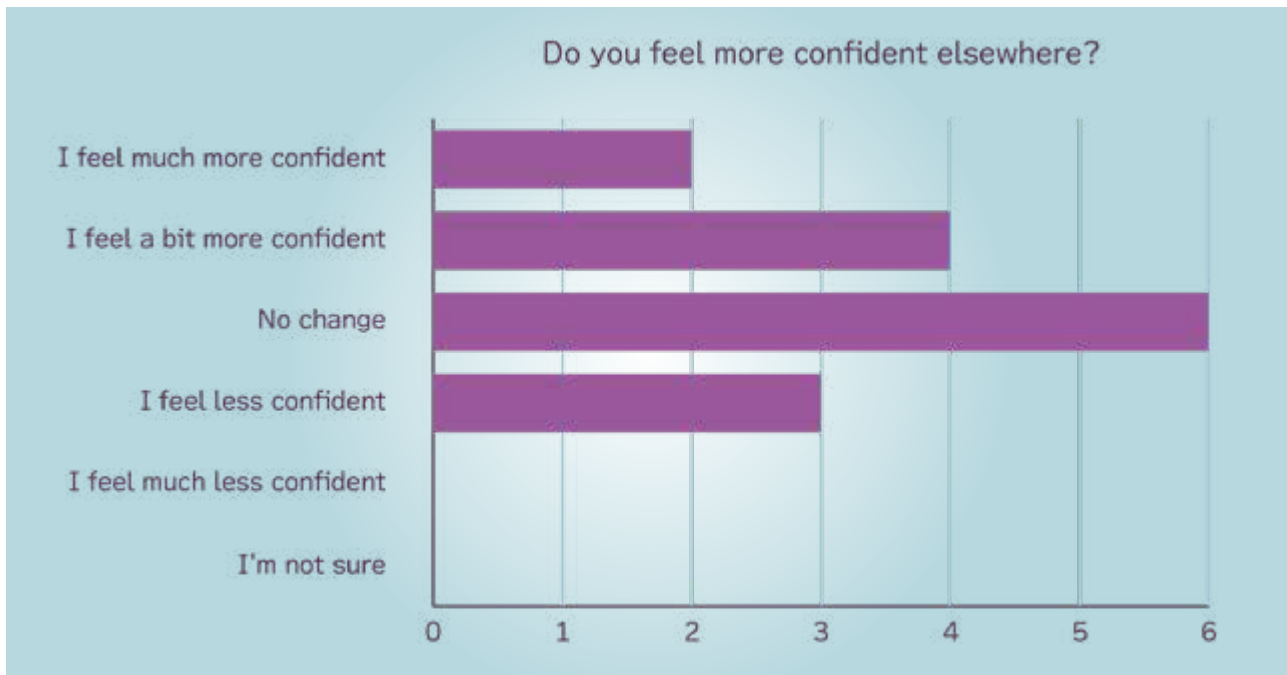


Figure 31 (ii): Confidence at Arts Network and elsewhere

*"After coming I feel a lot more confident [which] **lasts a couple of days.**"*

*"Going on trips increases confidence and helps you feel part of the group, especially because **you meet new people who attend workshops on different days to you.**"*

Interestingly, however, comments from some member co-researchers suggest that **increased confidence may not necessarily always be a good thing:**

*"It depends what environment you're in, what it is you're doing, and where you are. I think that, to me... would be different in different environments, like how confident I feel in different places."*

*"Maybe you think of Arts Network as some sort of safe haven that could **decrease your confidence elsewhere because you feel so safe** [at Arts Network]."*

### 3.2.3.2 Optimism

Figure 32 indicates that **members self-report greater optimism whilst at Arts Network**, and for many this leads to a bit more optimism elsewhere. Increased optimism may indicate a reduction in mental health distress among members.

We shared this data with members in our questionnaire analysis session. One member co-researcher commented that *“Arts Network gives you something to look forward to”* and another said *“it gives you the lift you need to get out of the house, to take a chance with your day.”*

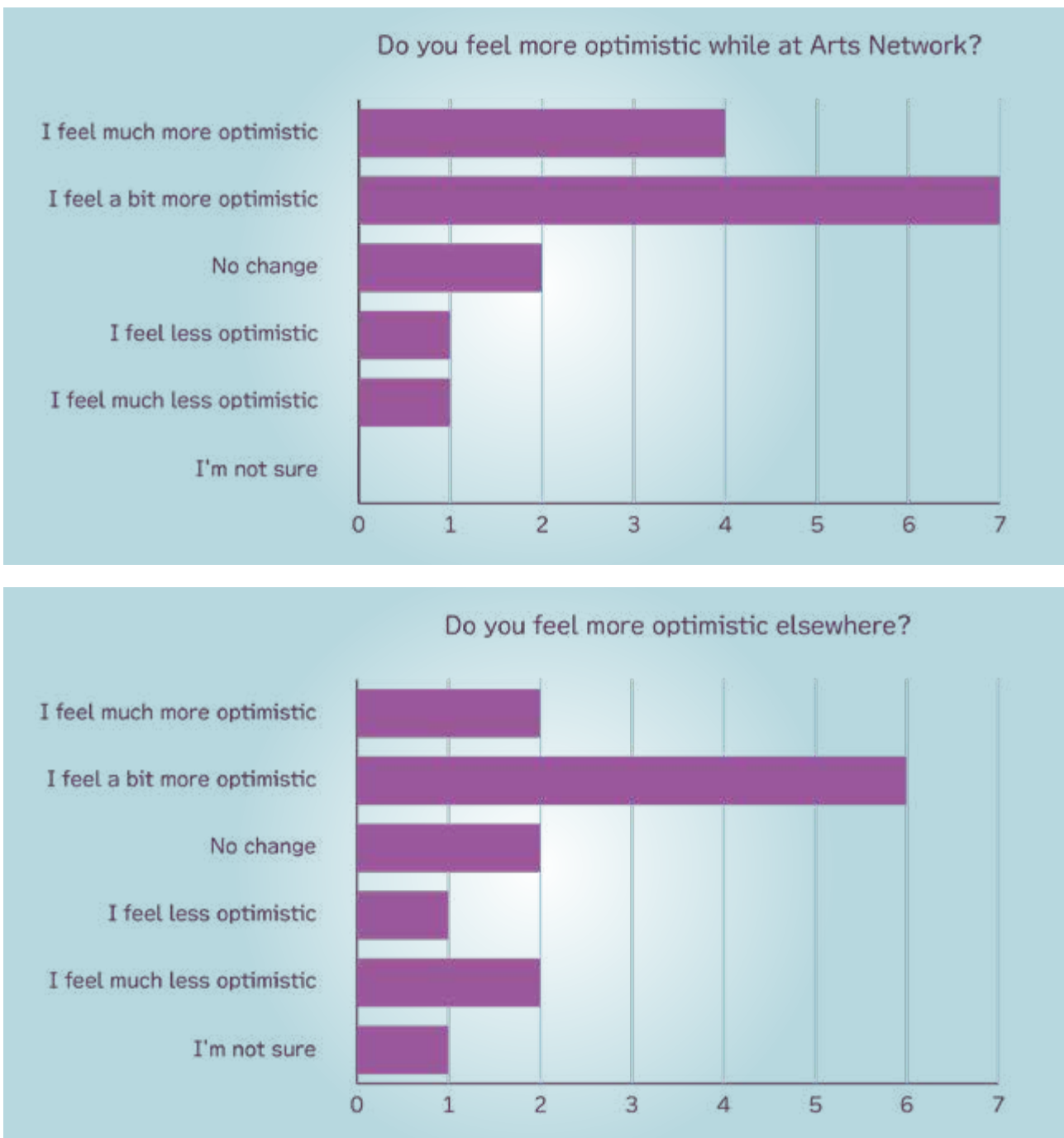


Figure 32 (i-ii): Optimism at Arts Network and elsewhere

### 3.2.3.3 Feeling like you're contributing something

Figure 33 shows the results for the question which asks whether members feel like they are making a positive contribution whilst at **Arts Network** and elsewhere. The data indicate that **members do feel they are making a positive contribution**, and for some this extends to their lives elsewhere.

This data was shared with members in our questionnaire analysis session. Member co-researchers talked extensively about how small actions can contribute a lot to other members:

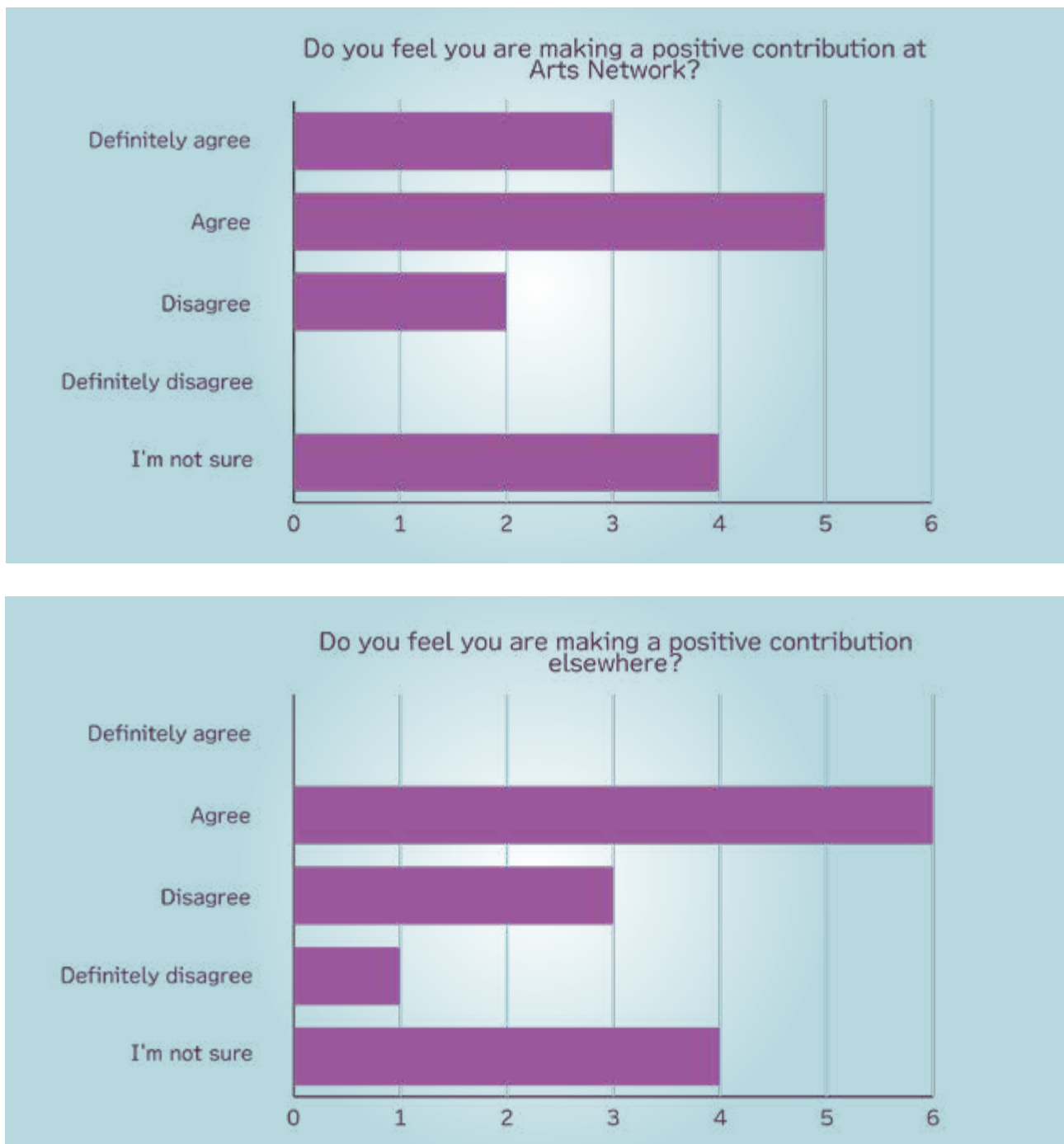


Figure 33 (i-ii): Making a positive contribution

*“Talking as well. **You don’t even realise what impact ... that you contributed.** And, you know, it works visa-versa, doesn’t it? ... **sometimes just have a little chat, and a laugh in the group.** And not everybody realised is like, how everybody’s feeling on the inside. What you portray on the outside, it can be completely different to what’s going on inside.”*

*“**Little things [like a smile] can have a really profound effect...** turning someone’s day around back can be a bigger contribution.” You don’t realise sometime what impact you have on other members who are struggling from a kind word or a smile.*

*“**Every time you make something, or you draw something, you’re contributing.** Even being here... Arts Network only exists through the people that come here.”*

These member co-researchers expressed **how they felt their involvement in this evaluation was contributing something important to Arts Network** – the asked to leave up the work we completed in the postcard analysis (figure 5) on the wall for other members to see.



The following data came from the questionnaire alone and were not discussed with the Arts Network co-researchers.

### 3.2.3.4 Happiness

Figure 34 shows the impact on respondents' happiness as a consequence of Arts Network – both whilst at the workshop and elsewhere. This self-report data indicates that being at Arts Network is clearly associated with members feeling happier. For some, but not all, this happiness extended away from the workshop – six reported 'no change' or 'I'm not sure'. This suggests a way in which Arts Network may benefit the mental health of its members.

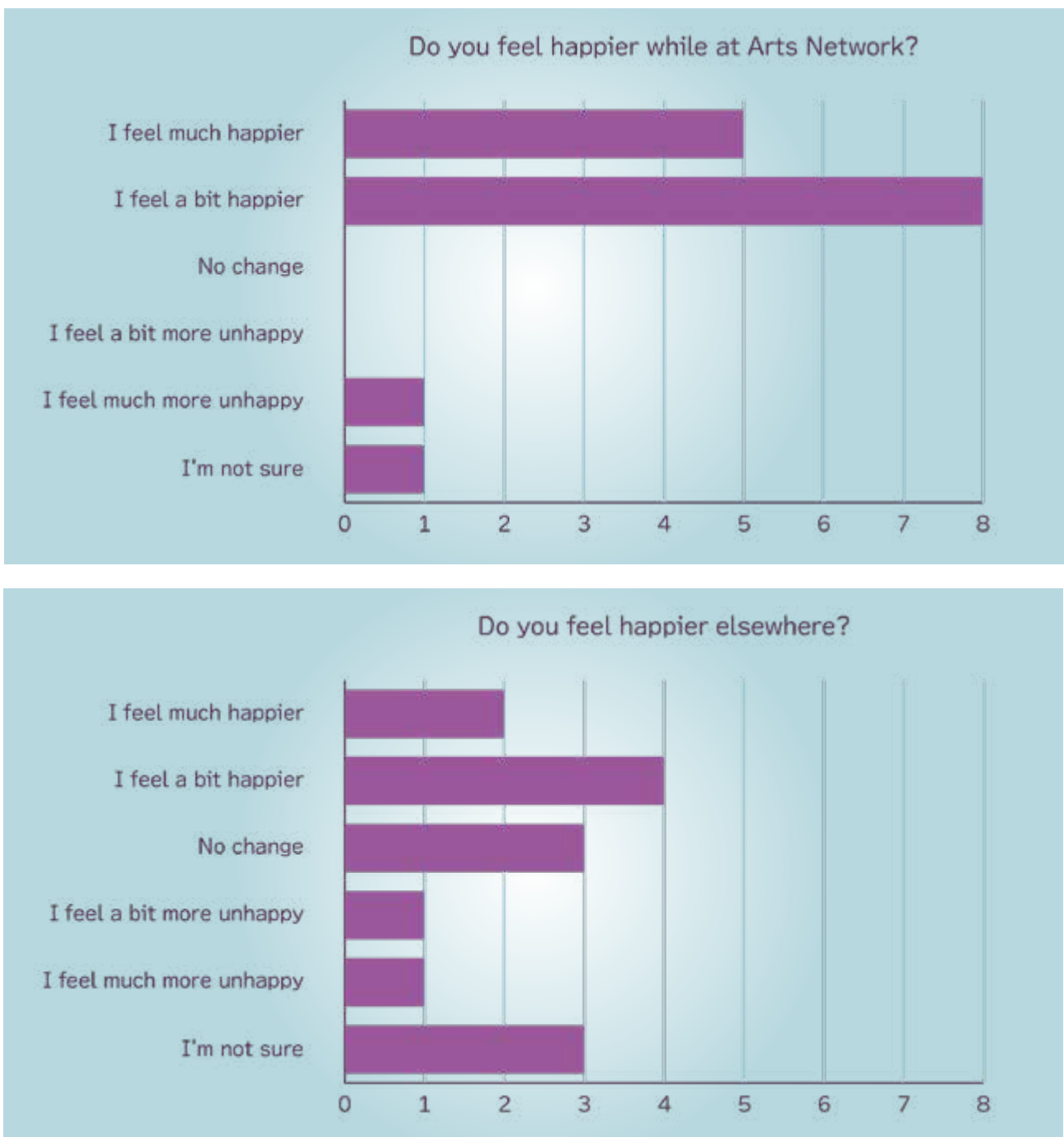


Figure 34 (i-ii): Happiness at Arts Network and elsewhere

### 3.2.3.5 Relaxed

Figure 35 indicates that for almost all respondents, members report that **attending Arts Network helped them feel more relaxed**, and that for many of these members, to some extent these feelings extended to their lives elsewhere. As with happiness, these feelings of relaxation indicate that **Arts Network** may be beneficial to its members' mental health.

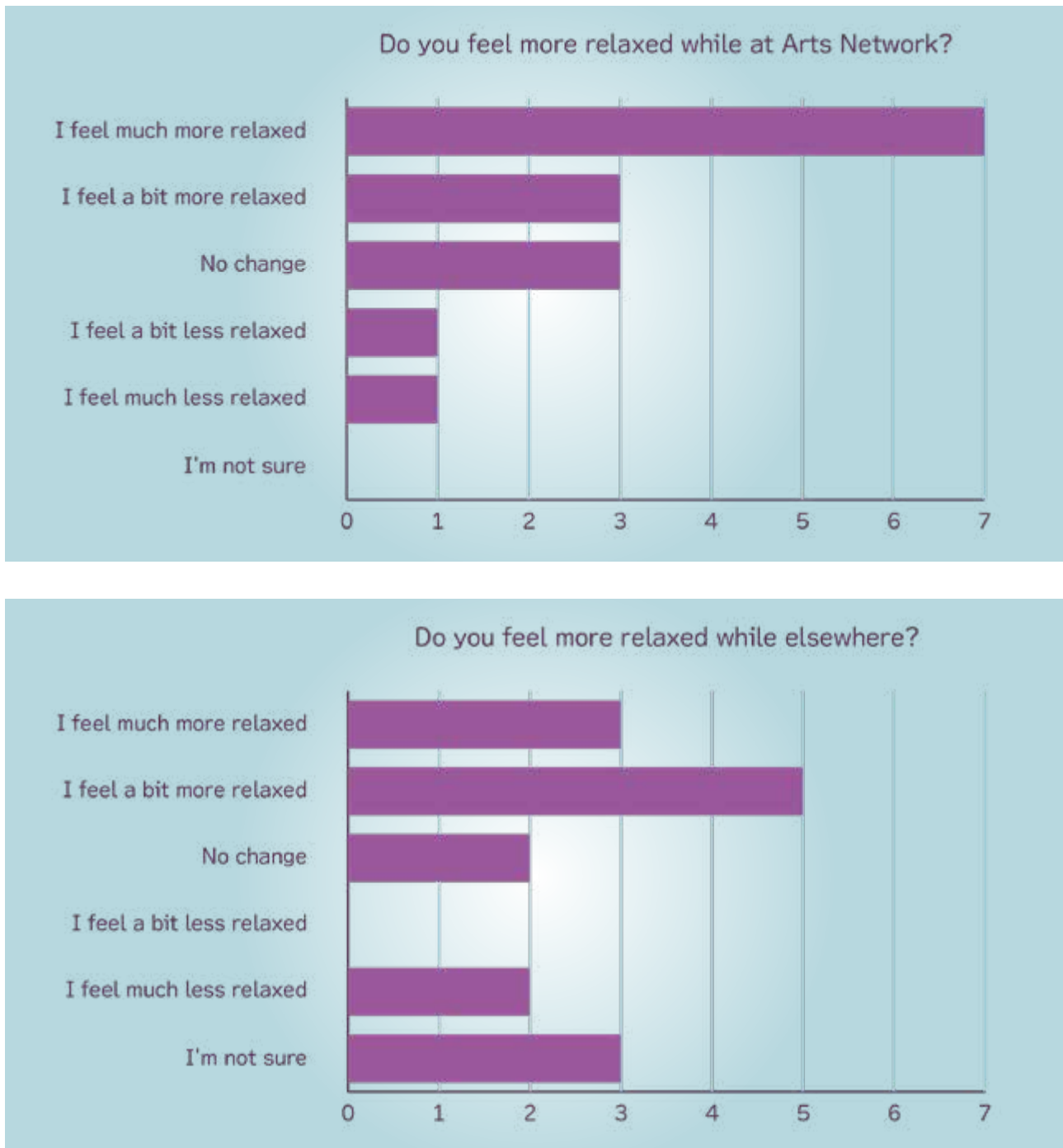


Figure 35 (i-ii): Feelings of relaxation at Arts Network and elsewhere

### 3.2.3.5 Sociability

Figure 36 indicates that **most members report feeling more sociable at Arts Network**, and that for many respondents, this carried over into their lives elsewhere. Increased sociability is likely to benefit members' mental health due to a reduction in isolation.

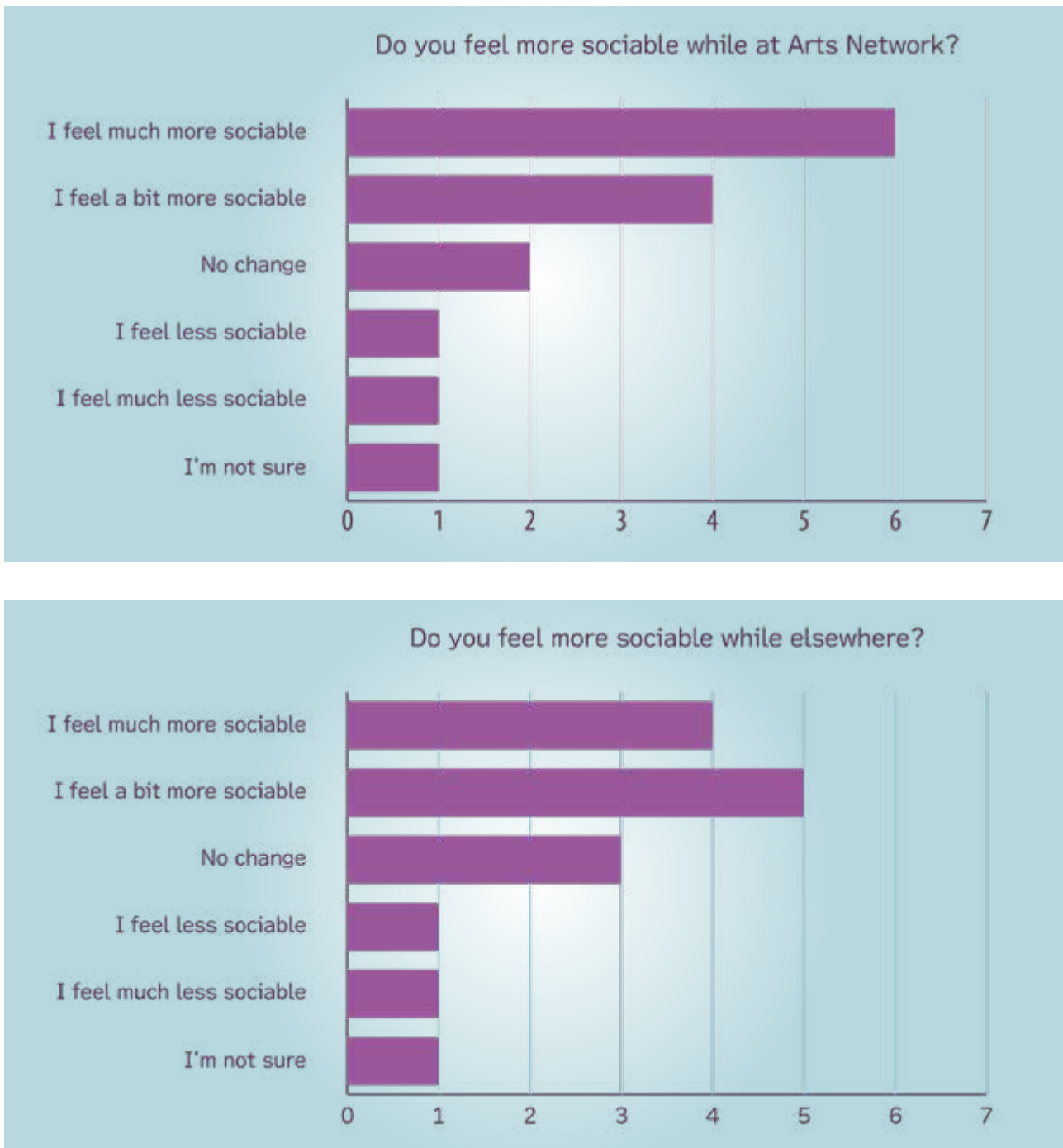


Figure 36 (i-ii): Sociability at Arts Network and elsewhere

### 3.2.3.6 Easier to talk to people

The questionnaire asked whether members find it easier to talk to people at Arts Network and elsewhere (figure 37). The data clearly show that **members find it easier to talk to people at Arts Network**. The data are more spread out with the 'elsewhere' question with a similar number reporting that they either 'agree' or 'disagree'. Finding it easy to talk to people may be related to **general feelings of confidence**. However, one comment mentioned previously suggested a down-side: *"maybe you think of Arts Network as some sort of safe haven that could decrease your confidence elsewhere because you feel so safe [at Arts Network]."*

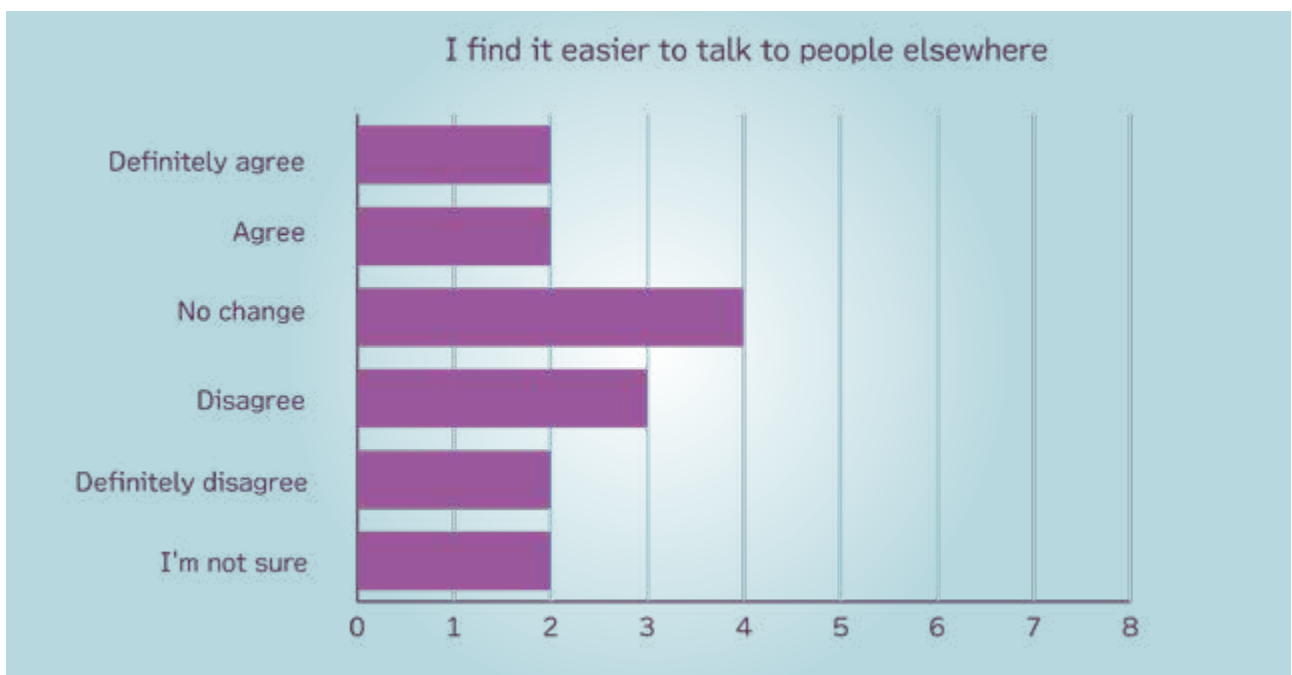
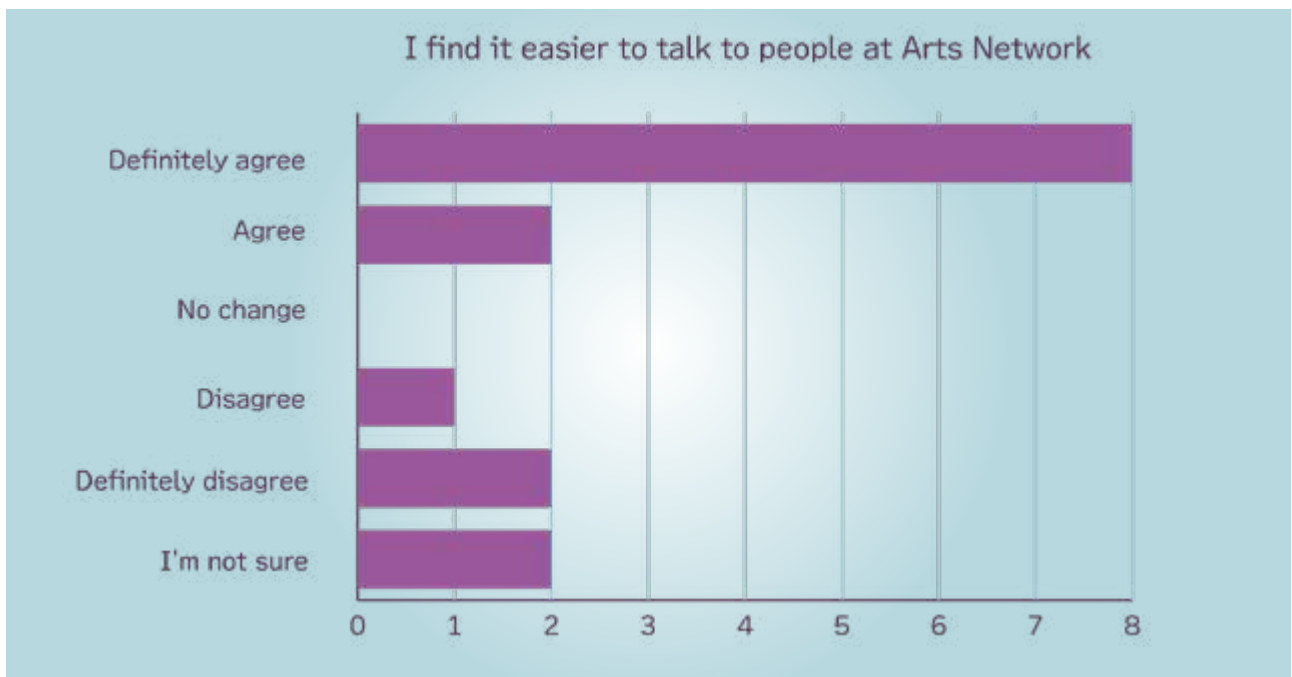


Figure 37 (i-ii): Ease of talking to people

### 3.2.3.7 Feeling useful

Our questionnaire asked whether members felt useful both at **Arts Network** and elsewhere (figure 38). It indicates that **most feel at least a bit useful**. Similar to the question about finding it easier to talk to people, this feeling of usefulness elsewhere is spread roughly equally in terms of feeling useful and not feeling useful.

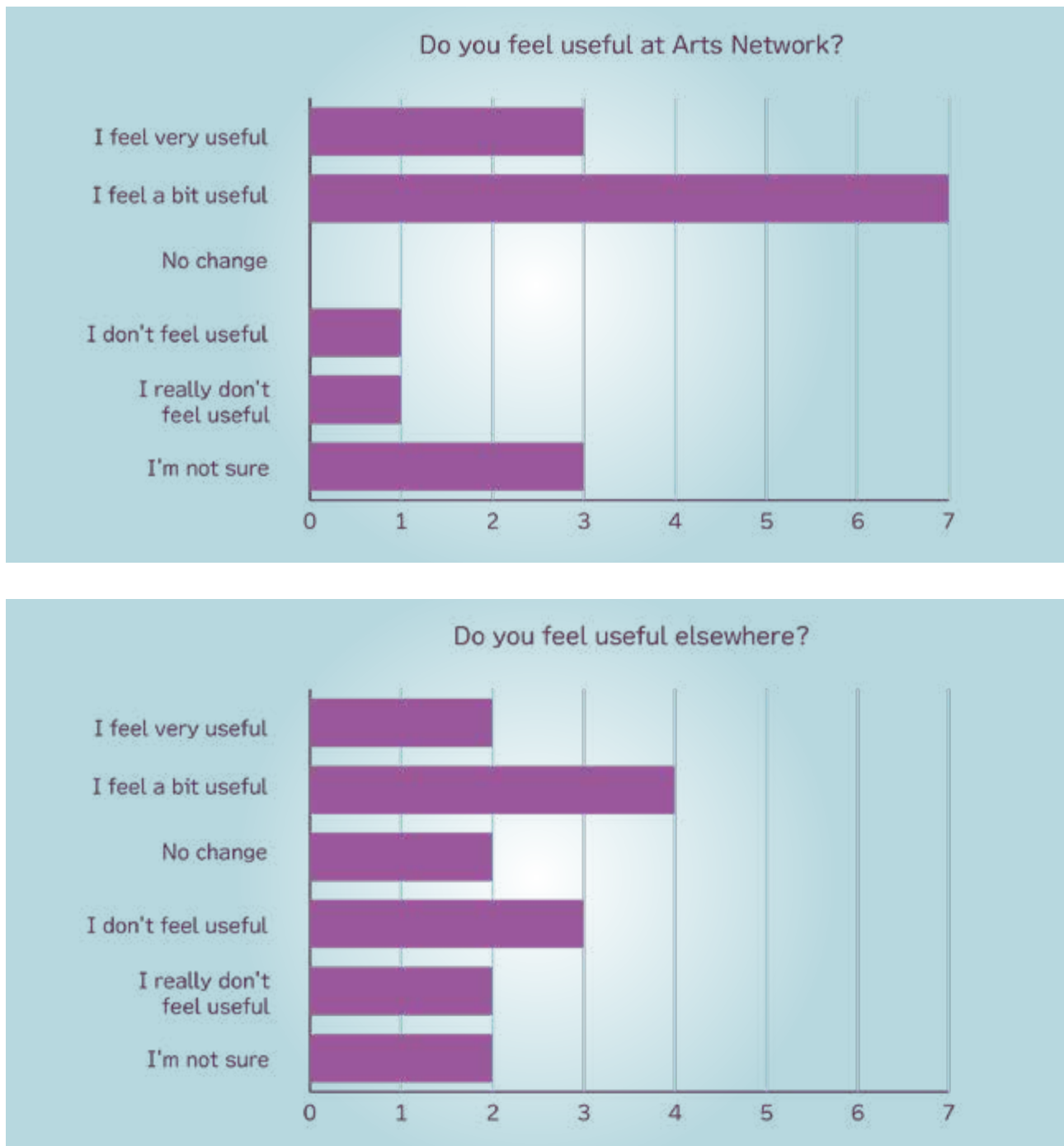


Figure 38 (i-ii): Feelings of usefulness

### 3.2.3.8 Feeling safe and respected

Figure 39 shows responses to the question asking about feeling safe and respected. Feeling safe and respected is crucial for good mental health. It is clear that **members overwhelmingly report feeling safe and respected whilst at Arts Network**. The data indicate that this tends not to extend to their lives elsewhere.

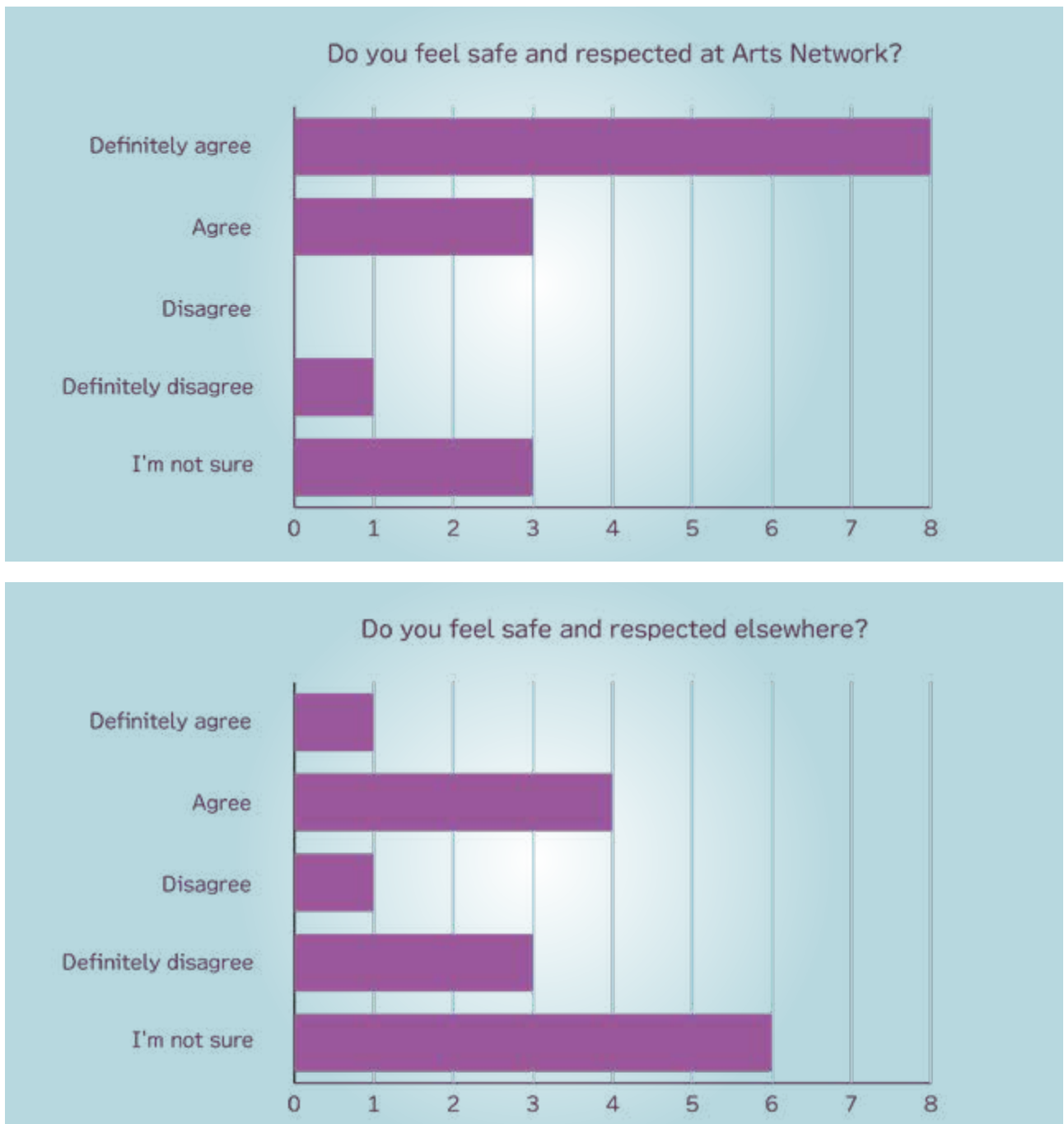


Figure 39 (i-ii): Feeling safe and respected

### 3.2.3.9 Feelings of loneliness

Figure 40 shows the responses to the questions about loneliness. It indicates overwhelmingly **members feel less lonely at Arts Network**, however, the impacts elsewhere are less clear. Feelings of loneliness can have a big impact on a person's mental health.

### 3.2.3.10 Summary

The responses to these ten questions may offer an explanation of the way in which attending **Arts Network** leads to improvements members' mental health.

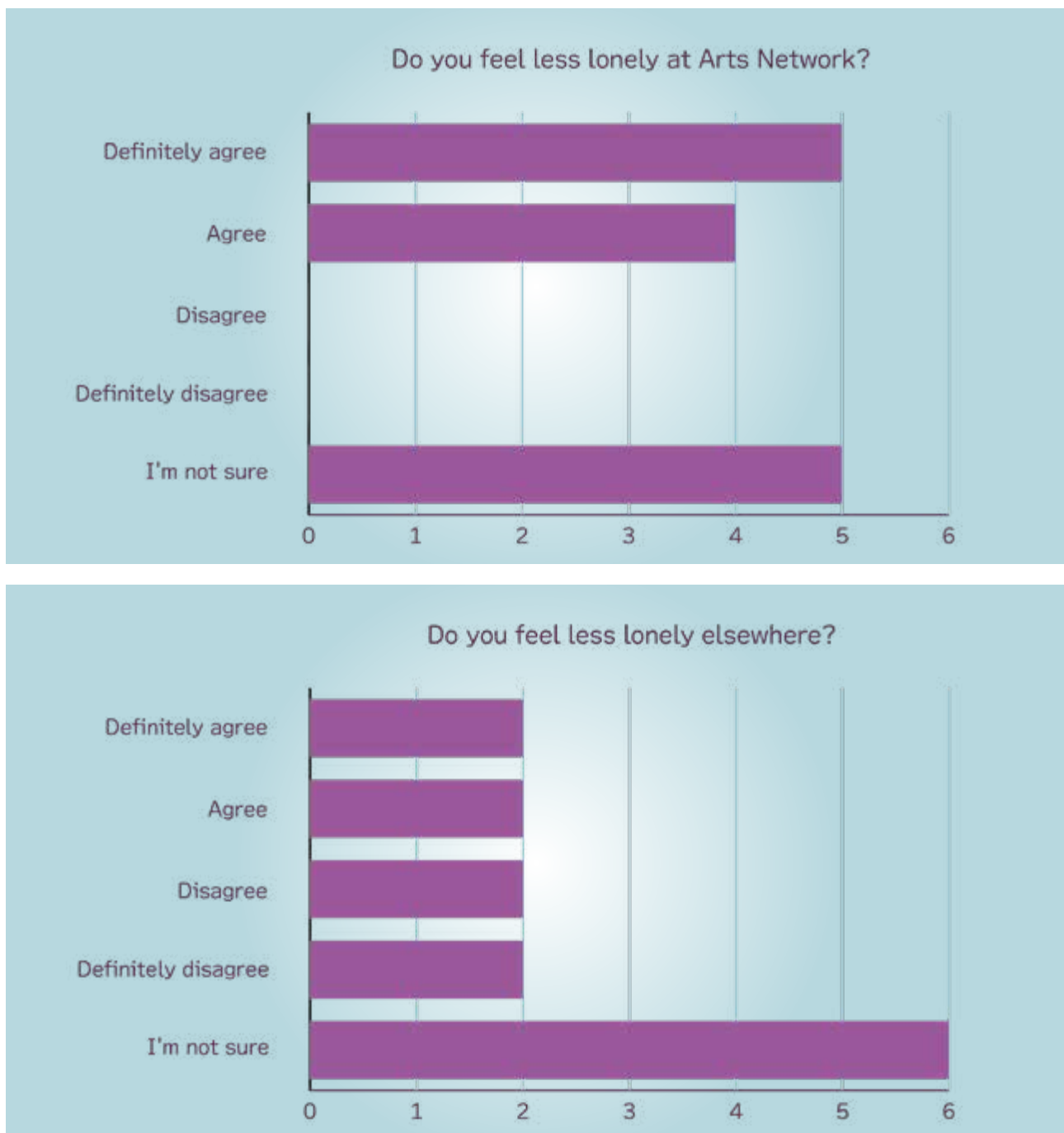


Figure 40 (i-ii): Feelings of loneliness

### 3.2.4 Attending Arts Network has...

#### 3.2.4.1 "Helped me cope with the stresses of life"

Figure 41 indicates that many members feel that **attending Arts Network has helped them cope with the stresses of life.**

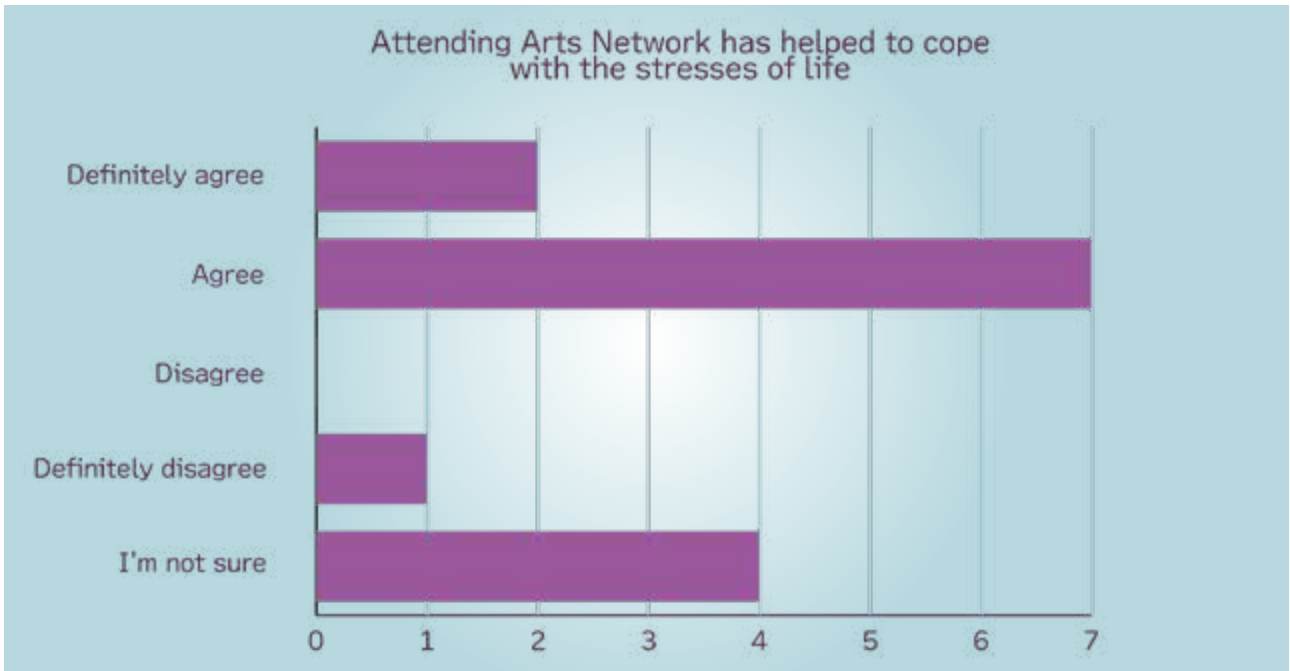


Figure 41: Attending Arts Network has helped me cope with the stresses of life

#### 3.1.4.2 "Improved my wellbeing"

Figure 42 indicates that many members believe that **Arts Network has directly improved their wellbeing.**

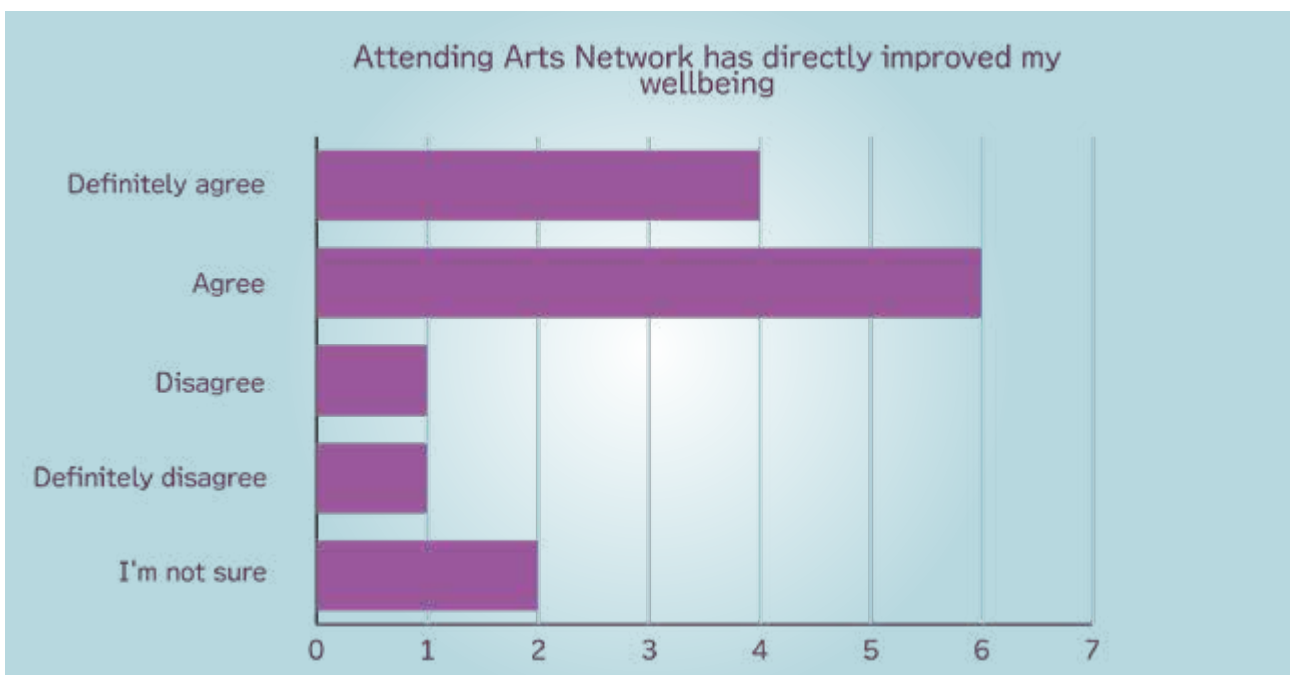


Figure 42: Attending Arts Network has improved my wellbeing



### 3.2.4.3 “Improved my self-esteem”

Figure 43 indicates that for many members, **Arts Network has greatly benefited their self-esteem.**

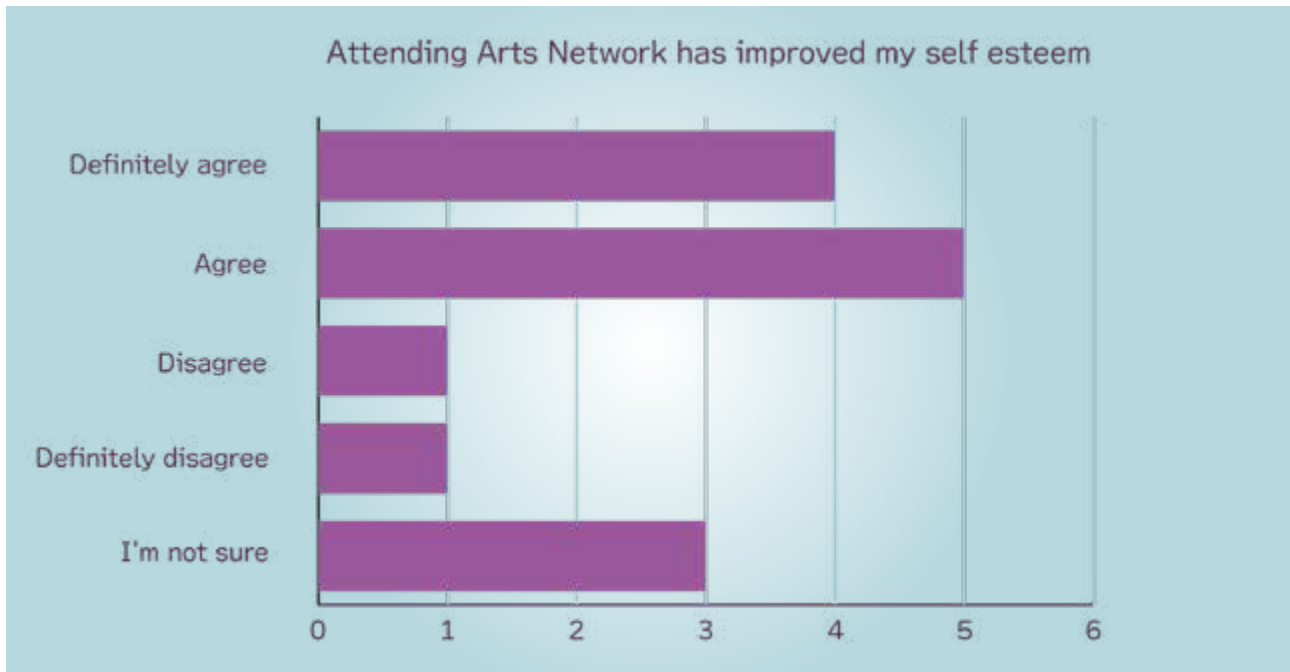


Figure 43: Attending Arts Network has improved my self-esteem

These three questions are important ones and, again may offer an explanation of the way in which attending **Arts Network** causes improvements members' mental health: **It is easy to imagine how increased ability to cope with the stresses of life, improved wellbeing and improved self-esteem could directly lead to improved mental health and wellbeing.**

### 3.2.5 How important to you is Arts Network's flexibility...

Arts Network is very **flexible for its members** in many ways:

#### 3.2.5.1 Workshop choices

Members are able to choose which workshops they do. **Figure 44** shows that for almost all members **this flexibility is either extremely important or important**. This suggests that **Arts Network** should maintain this way of operating.

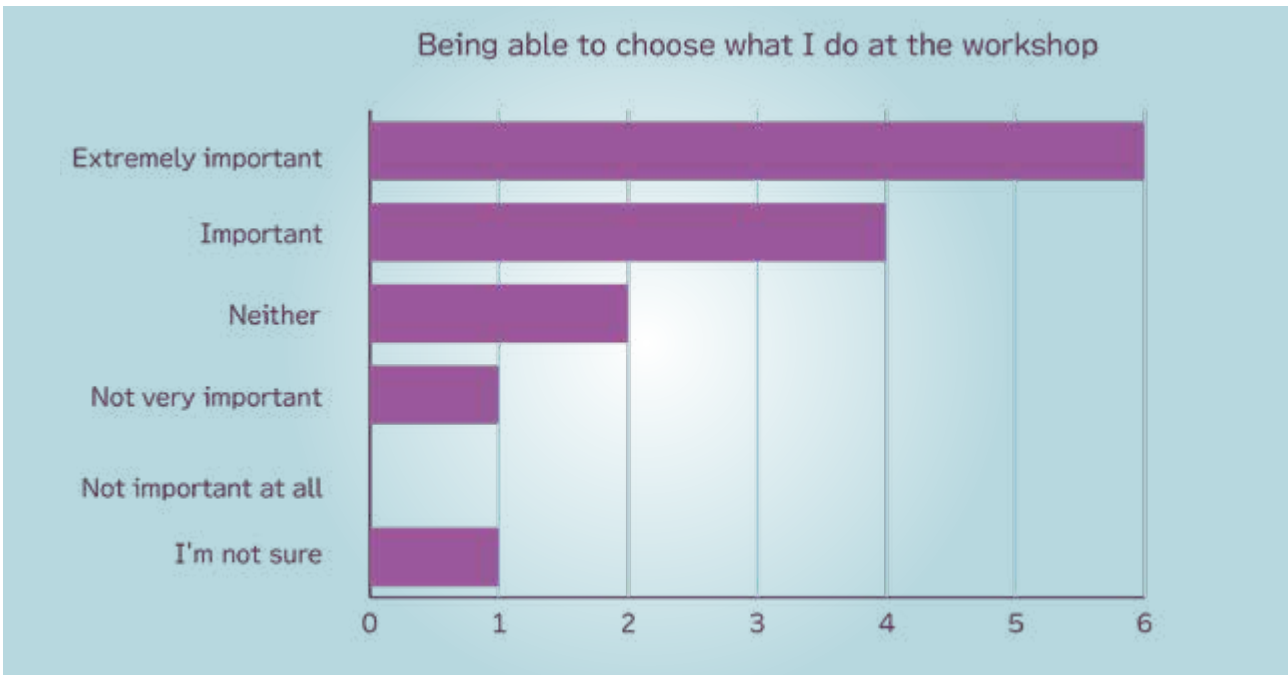


Figure 44: Being able to choose what I do at the workshop

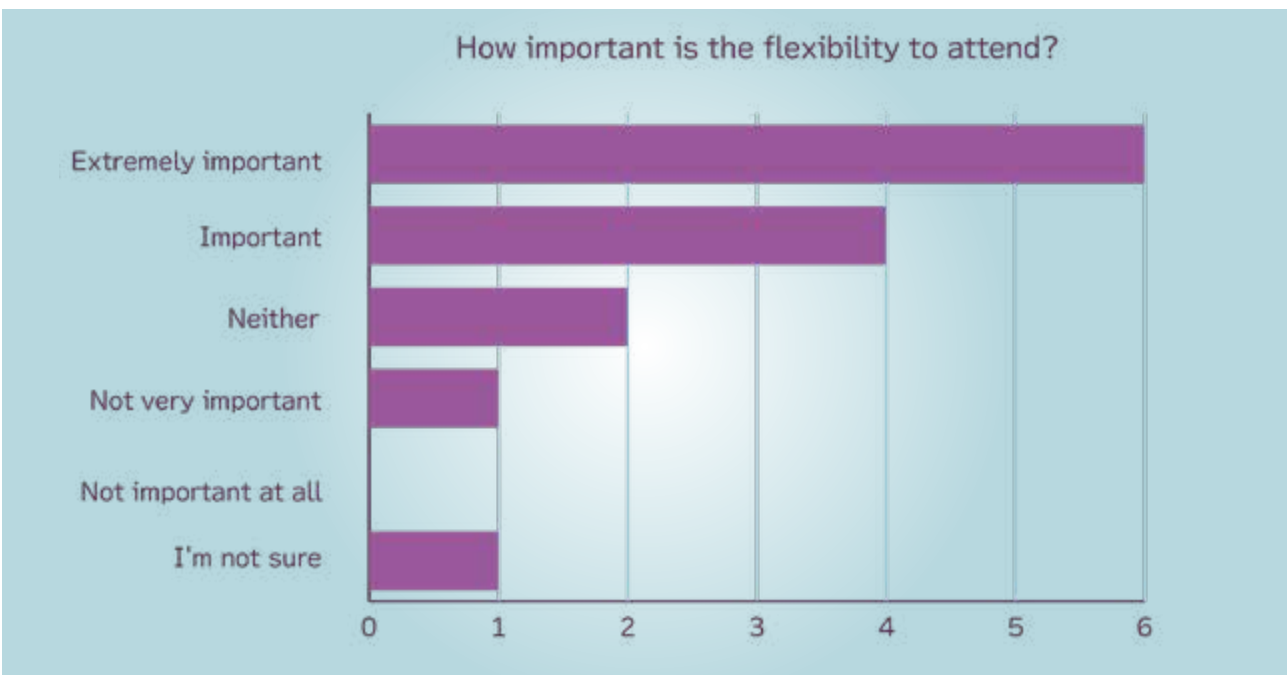


Figure 45: Not having to attend regularly (I can miss sessions and it doesn't matter)

### 3.2.5.2 Not having to attend regularly

Members do not need to attend each week. **Arts Network is flexible around fluctuating mental health** (for example, the impact this can have on a person's ability to leave home), and around family/work commitments. Members can become '**associate members**' if they are not actively attending workshops but wish to keep in touch. They can go on trips, receive **Stay Connected** magazine and engage in other ways. The data in [figure 45](#) indicate that this flexibility is extremely important to members.

### 3.2.5.3 No pressure to do activities

In previous reports, **the absence of pressure to do specific activities has been found to be important to Arts Network members**. The present data in [figure 46](#) indicate that this remains to be the case, with almost all reporting that it is either important or extremely important.

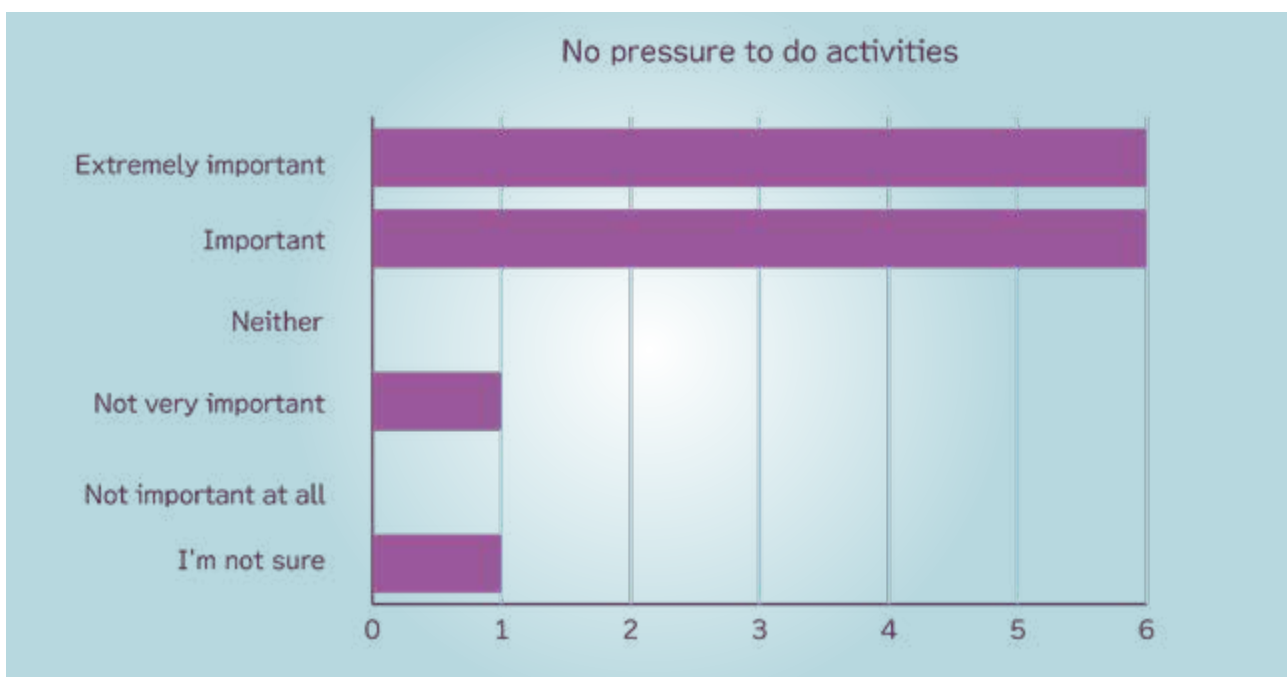


Figure 46: No pressure to do activities

### 3.2.4 How important is Arts Network to your life?

We asked members to indicate whether different aspects of **Arts Network** were important to them (figure 47). It is interesting that the most frequently chosen statement was around **learning new things**, the **role of art as a distraction** is also clear in the statement **'it takes my mind off things'**.

The questions around looking forward to it, motivation, and leaving the house indicate a way in which **Arts Network** may offer people a way in which they can take actions which benefit their own mental health – **a reason to get out of the house and something enjoyable to look forward to**.

The **importance of community** at **Arts Network** has been recognised in our previous reports, and it is clear that this remains important to members – social aspects of **Arts Network** are discussed in the next section.

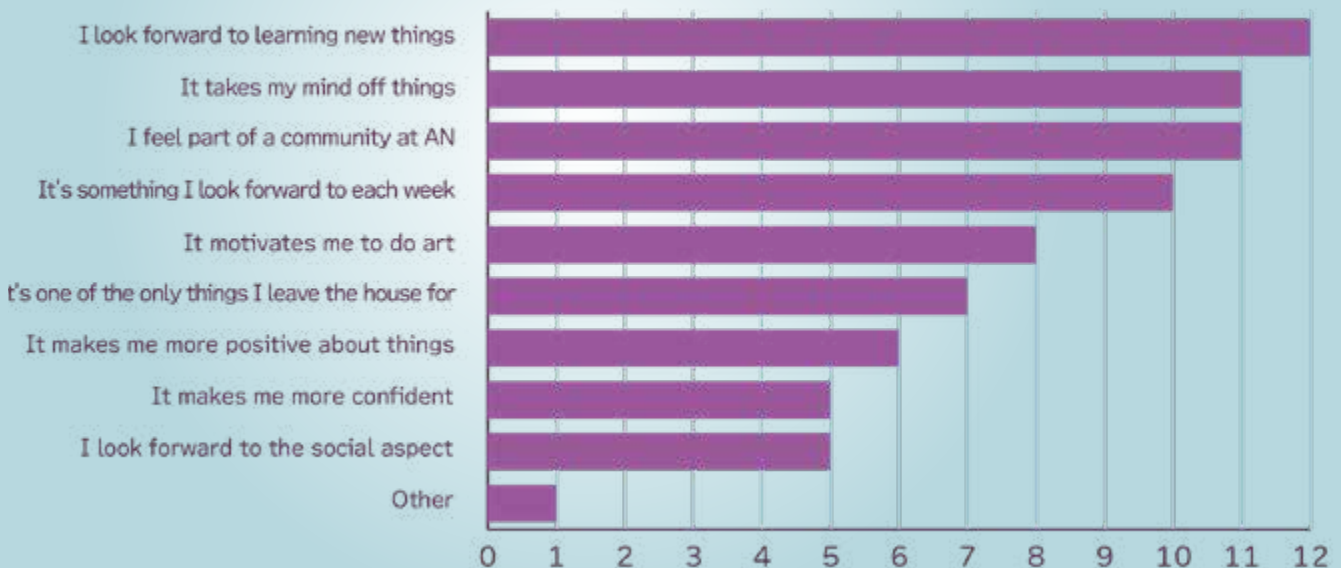
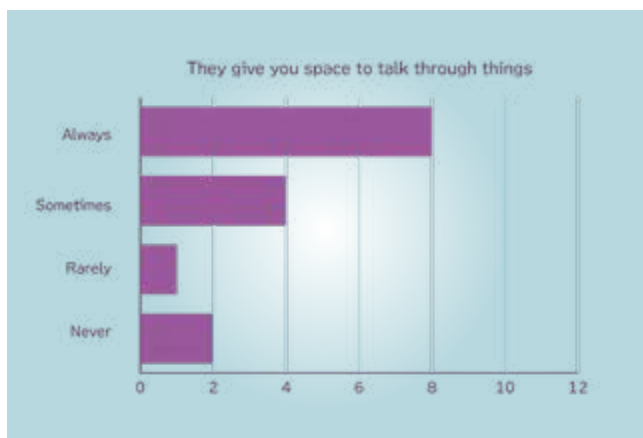
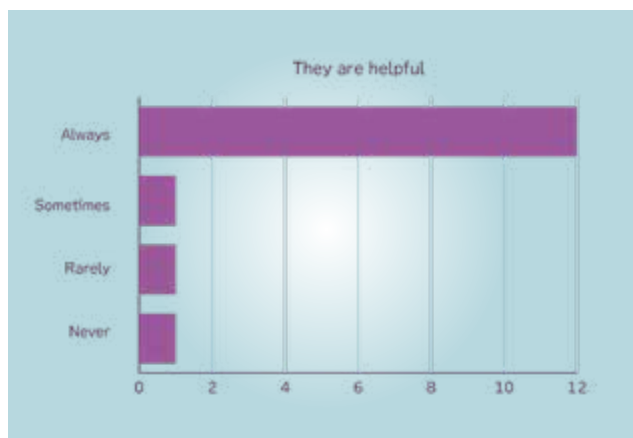
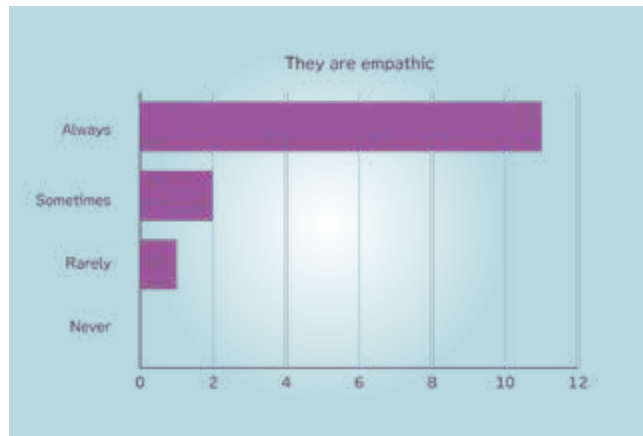
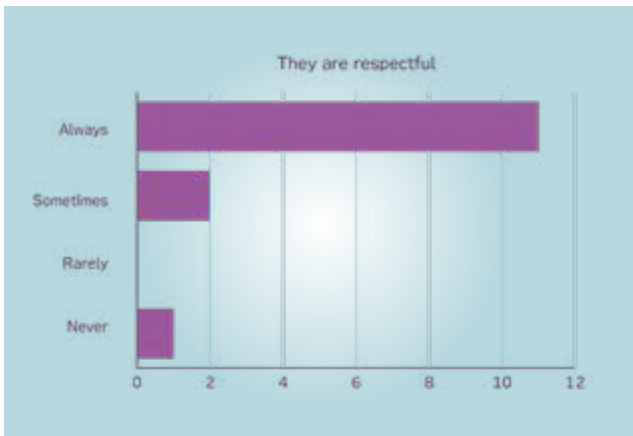
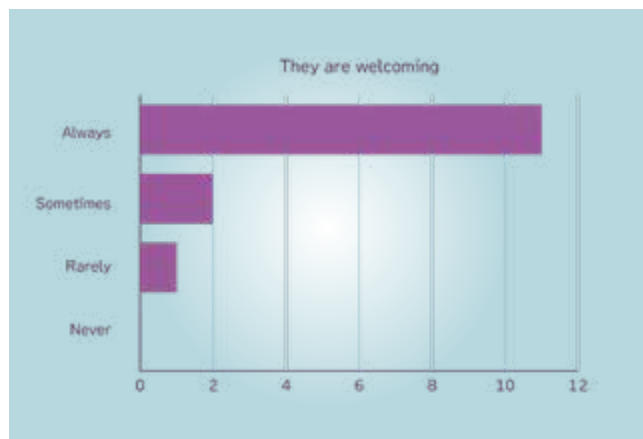


Figure 47: How much is Arts Network important to your life (please tick any that apply)

### 3.2.5 Arts Network staff

Figure 48 shows questionnaire respondents' answers to questions about Arts Network staff. Overwhelmingly **members report that the staff do an outstanding job of supporting them**: they are welcoming; respectful; empathic; helpful; supportive; they listen; they give you space to talk through things; they challenge you to try new things; and help you 'think outside the box'. It is **easy to imagine how these qualities benefit the relationships** which are formed between staff and members, and how these can **facilitate the development of better mental health**.

Figure 48 (i-v): What members think of Arts Network staff



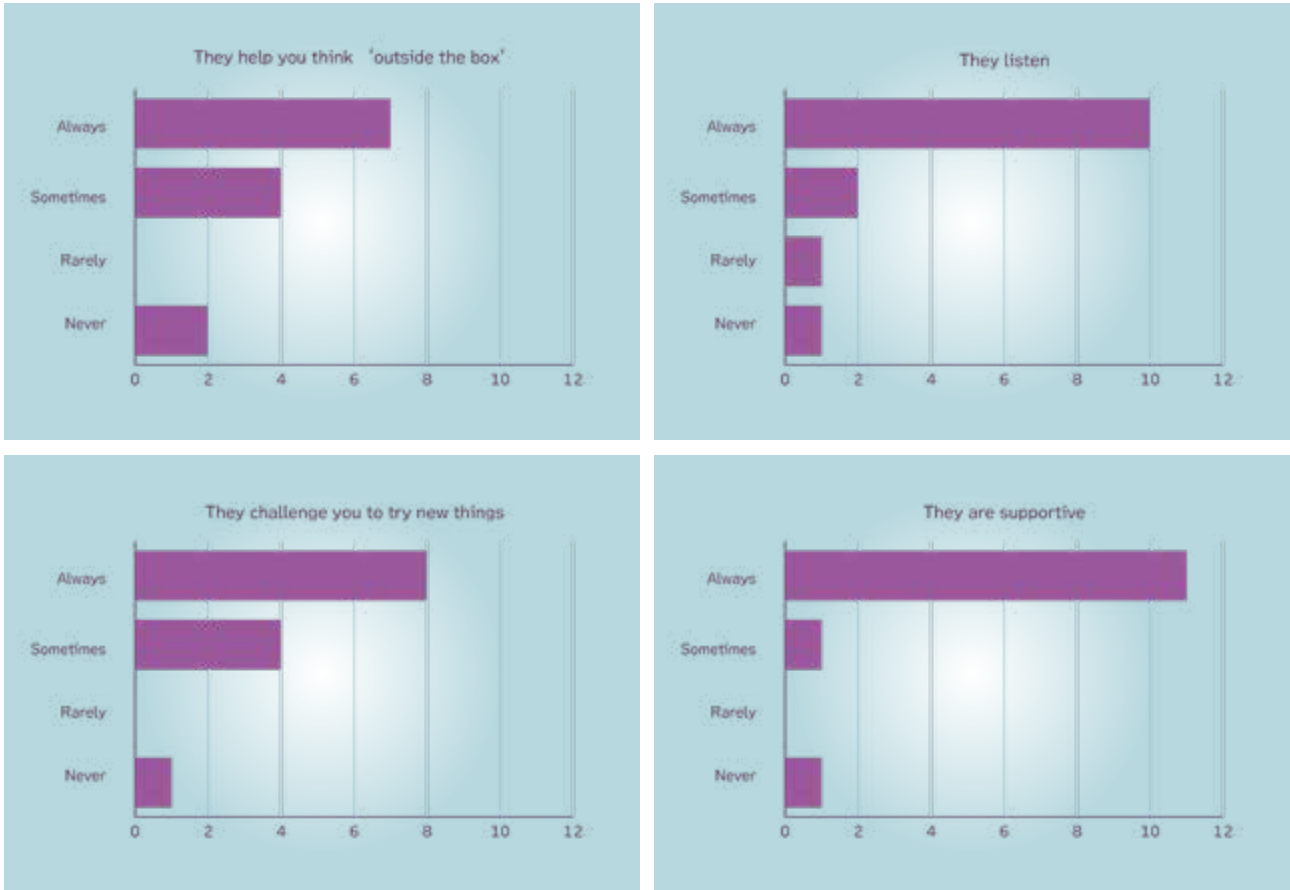


Figure 48 (vi-ix): What members think of Arts Network staff

### 3.2.6 Stay Connected magazine

Figure 49 indicates that **Stay Connected magazine is an important way** in which members engage with **Arts Network**.

**Stay Connected** magazine was created in response to the first pandemic lockdown, and was originally published monthly. Due to the amount of work it takes to produce an edition, and because members can access activity in the workshop now, publication has now reduced to every other month, alternating with a newsletter (distributed among members only). The magazine is seen as a particularly important part of **Arts Network’s** activities.

In November 2022, **Stay Connected** has a **circulation of 830 copies**. In addition to **Arts Network** members, it is also sent to:

- **South London and the Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust** inpatient wards and other services
- **Lewisham Council** (Cultural Department)
- **The Horniman Museum**
- **Sydenham Gardens**
- **Community Centres:** Coin Street, Stockwell Park, Lee Green Lives; Lewisham Local, 999 Club

Last year **Stay Connected** magazine was **extremely popular with members**, who enjoy reading it and participating in the activities described within it. This year the data are similarly positive – **figure 49** shows that two-thirds of respondents say that it is always easy to read, and similar numbers find the magazine to be always interesting and they can follow and carry out the activities within it.

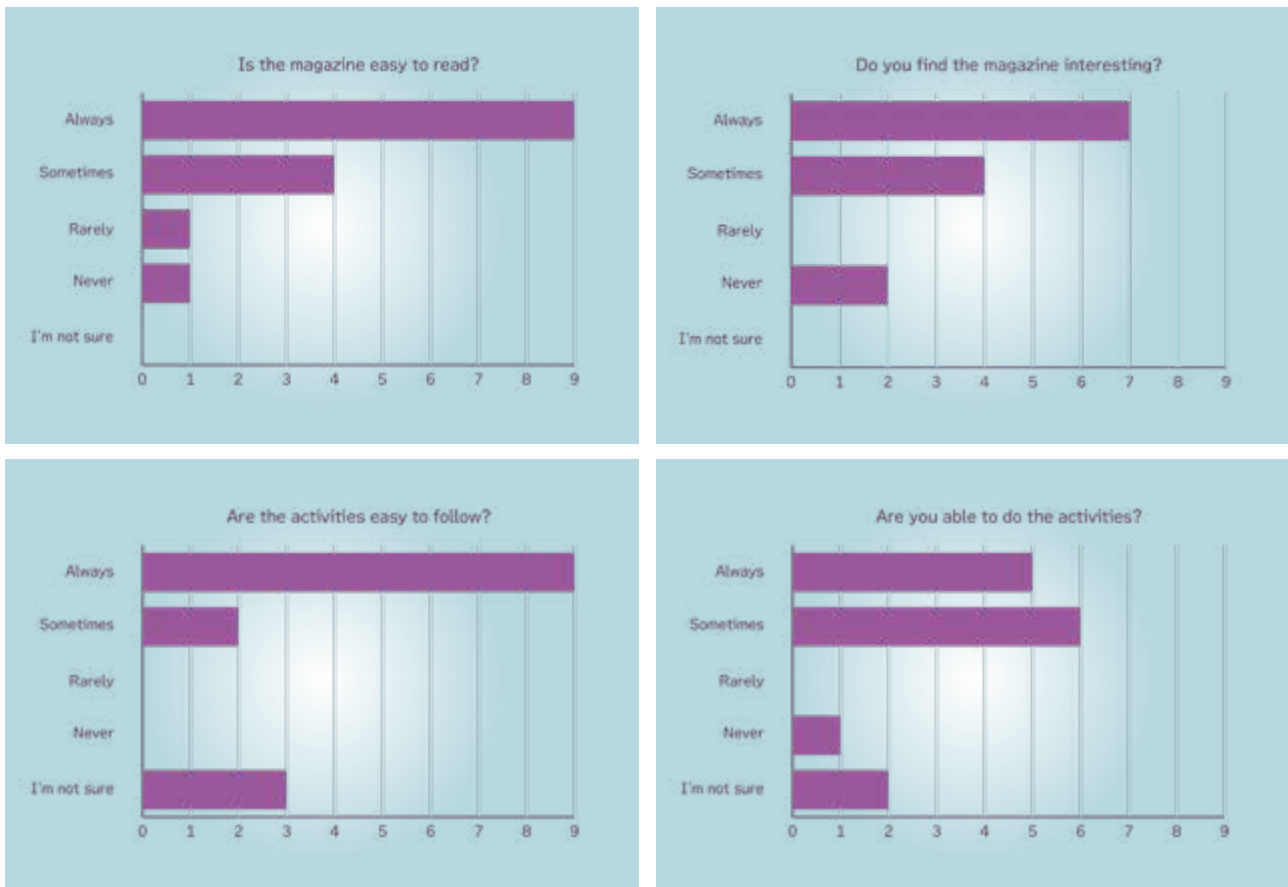


Figure 49 (i-iv): Stay Connected magazine

### 3.2.7 Possible suggestions for Arts Network

Figure 50 shows several suggestions for things Arts Network might do. Lots of members reported wanting to **go to more sessions**, and support to **do more art at home**. There was **hesitancy about wanting to go on more trips and seeing a greater variety of courses**, with most responding to these questions that they weren't sure – this may be because they feel that Arts Network have the **right balance at present**.

Our questionnaire asked for any other **suggestions members have for Arts Network**:

*“The materials cupboards are stressful to look at and unorganised, so finding materials can be difficult and sometimes materials are used up or dry and not replaced”*

*“Clearer communication on accessibility - didn't know about being able to park outside with a blue badge (could be in the magazine/welcome pack) I would be interested in a studio space but would not be able to have one due to stairs (no lift)”*

*“I'd like to do a bigger variety of specialist craft workshops like macrame, jewellery - workshops with an end product.”*

*“More instructions on technique”*

*“I'd also like help to write a children's book”*

*“To open other venues for people with mental health problems/difficulties”*

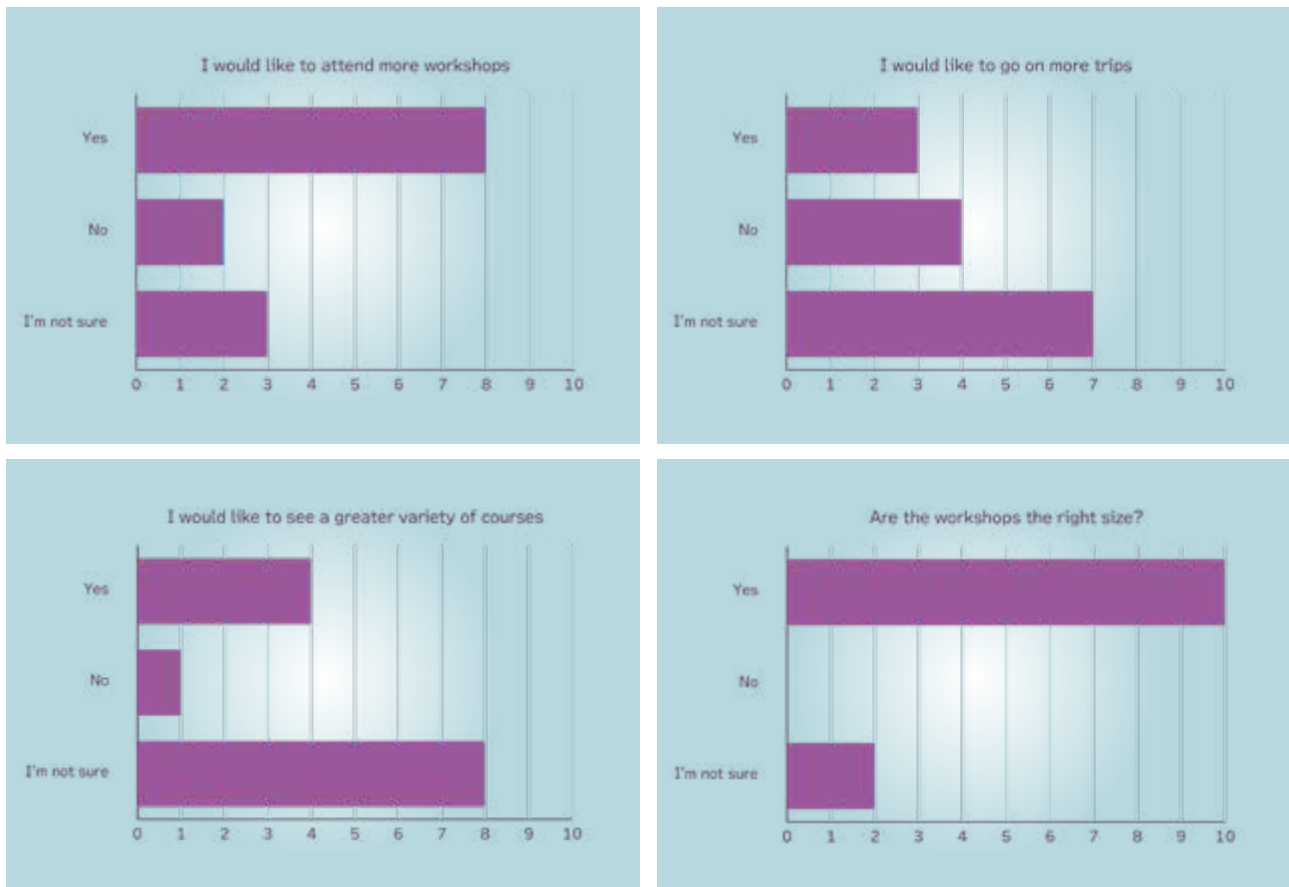


Figure 50 (i-iv): Possible suggestions for Arts Network



### 3.2.8 Duration of membership of questionnaire respondents

They were an **even spread** in terms of how long our questionnaire respondents had been members of **Arts Network** (figure 51).

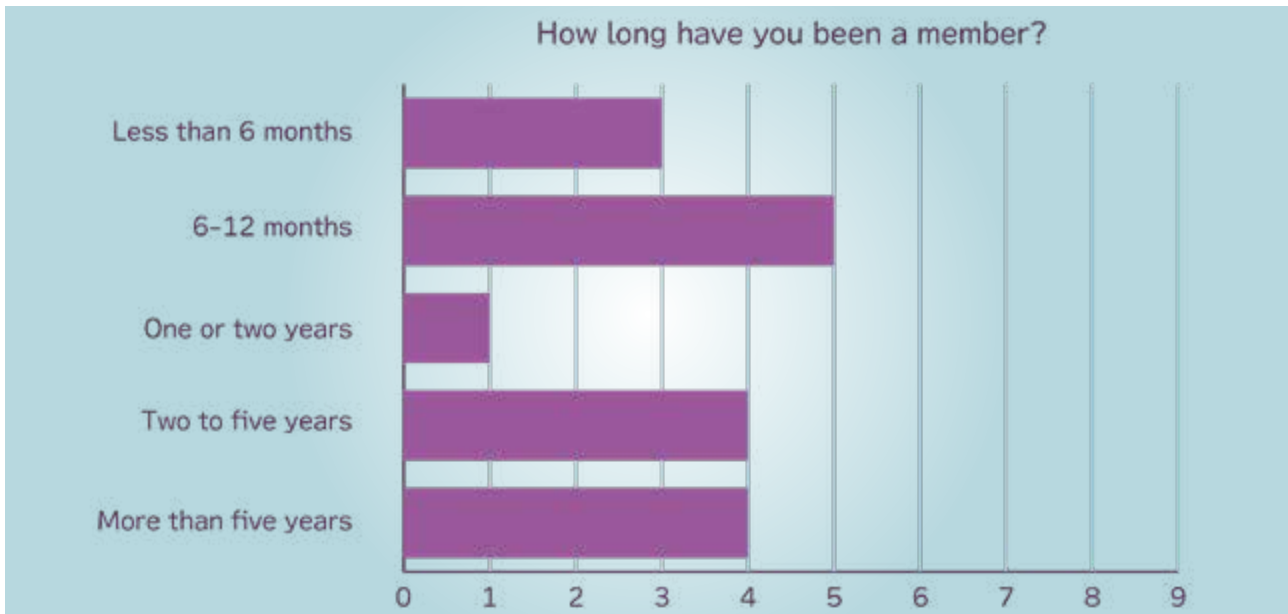


Figure 51: How long have you been a member of Arts Network?

### 3.2.9 Engagement in arts-based activities

We asked how often members engage in arts-based activity during the week. This includes doing art independently at home; following activities in **Stay Connected** magazine; joining online workshops; or face-to-face sessions at the **Arts Network** workshop. **Figure 52 shows that most respondents engage in arts-based activity at least once per week with more than half engaging more than twice a week.**

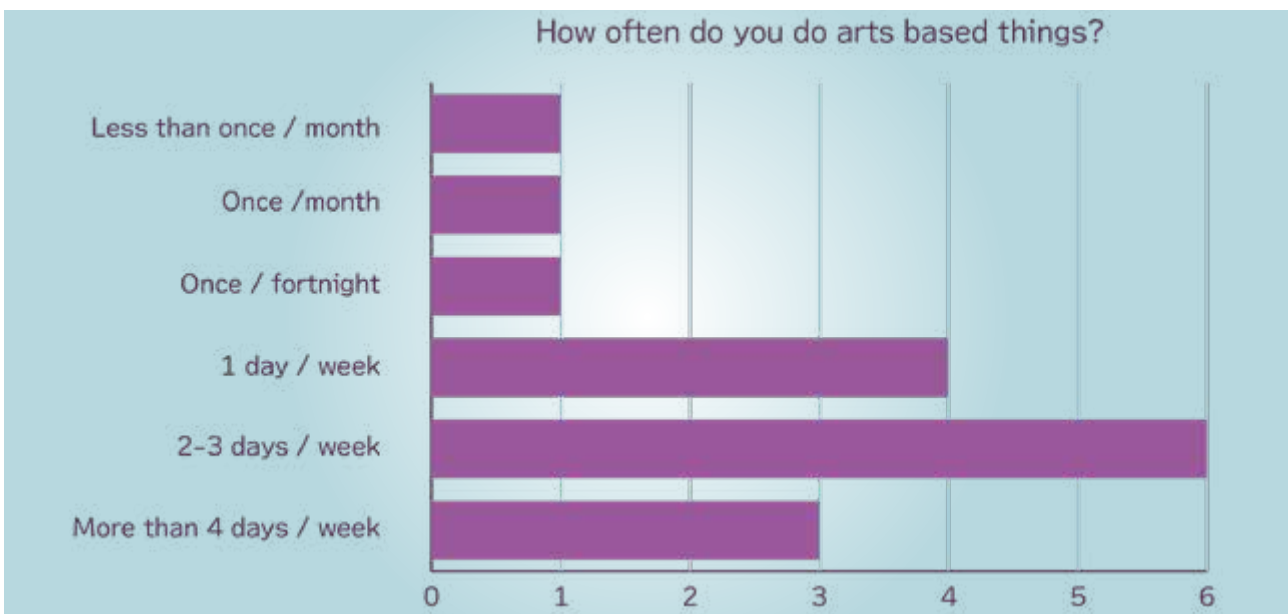


Figure 52: Roughly how often do you do arts-based things (e.g. doing art at home, following activities in Stay Connected, online workshops, or coming to face-to-face workshops)?

We also asked which **Arts Network** opportunities respondents had engaged in. **Figure 53** shows **broad engagement across the range offered by Arts Network**, and highlights **the importance of Stay Connected magazine** (see [section 3.2.6](#)).

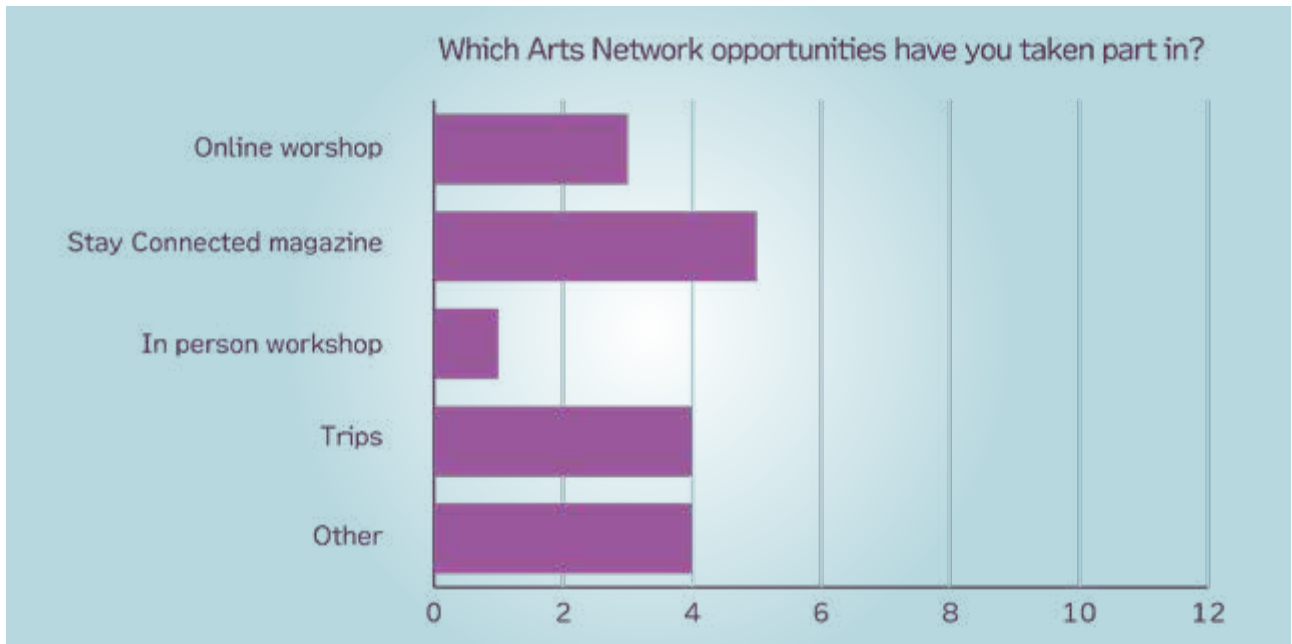


Figure 53: Which Arts Network opportunities have you taken part in this year?

### 3.2.10 Trying new things

We asked whether attending **Arts Network** helped respondents be **more open to trying new activities elsewhere**. **Figure 54** indicates that this is the case for the majority of members. This is a particularly important finding, as it suggests **Arts Network actively helps its members engage more broadly in their community**.

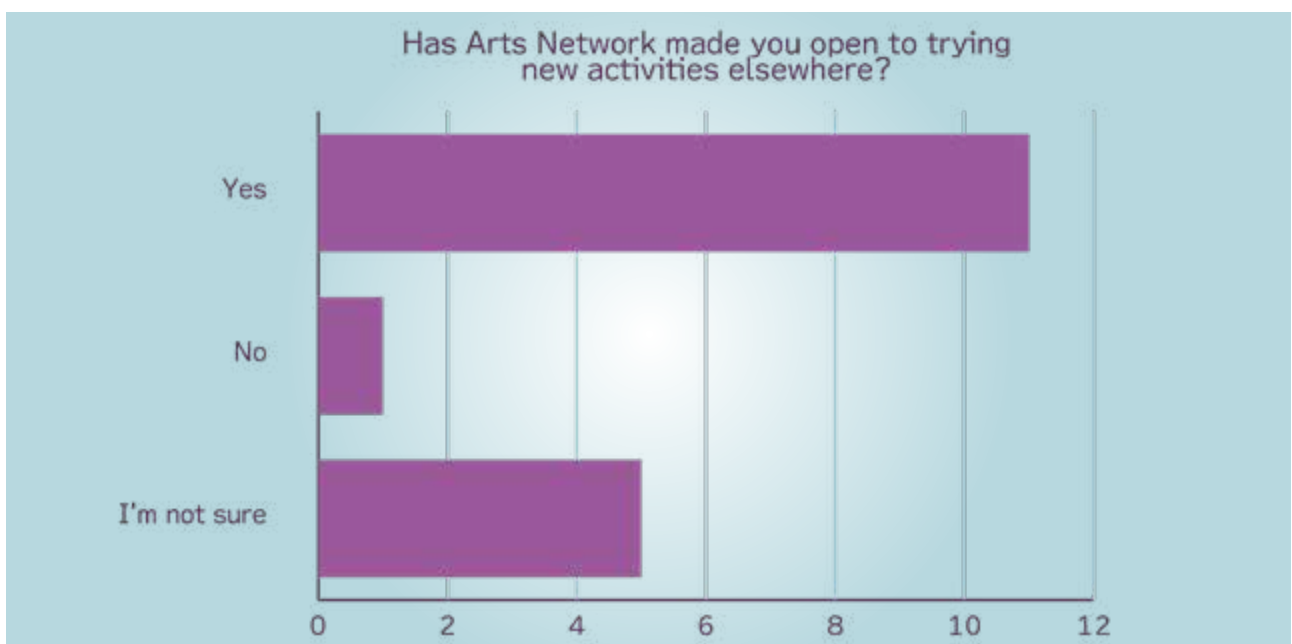


Figure 54: Has Arts Network made you open to trying new activities elsewhere?

Figure 55 breaks the data down into which activities members had engaged in – including **education, training, volunteering or paid work or none of those listed**. It suggests that **Arts Network** helps members **access other opportunities** in their community.

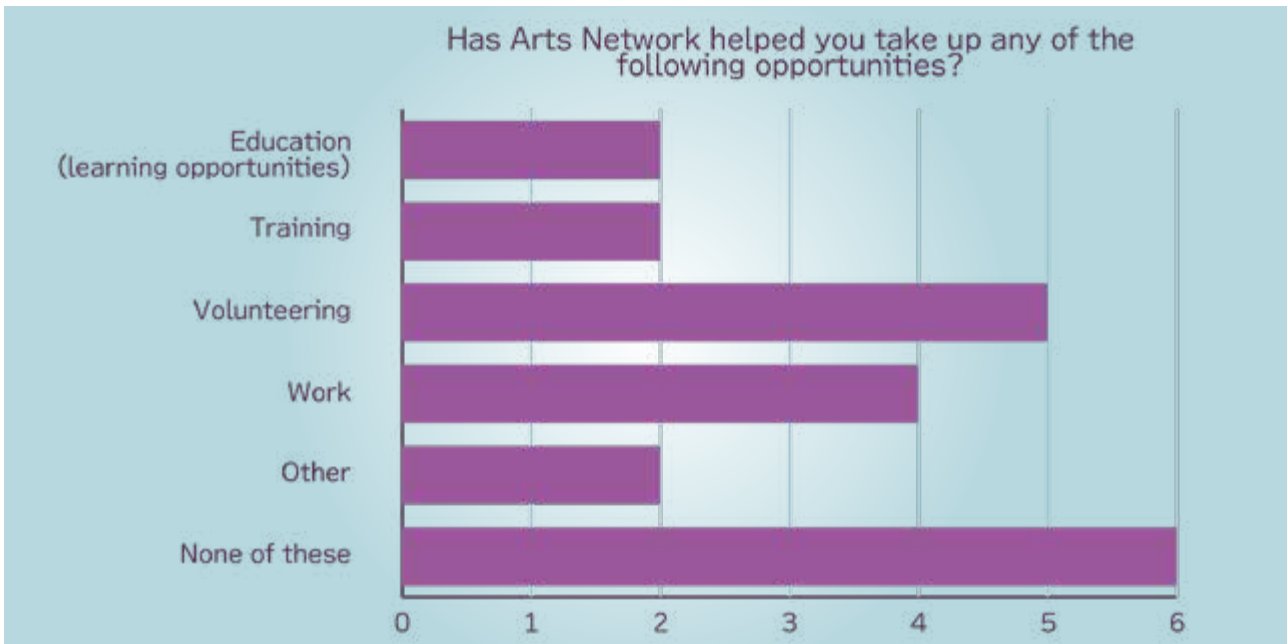


Figure 55: Has Arts Network helped you take up any of the following opportunities?

### 3.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEMES IDENTIFIED IN PREVIOUS YEARS

2019	2020	2022
No pressure	No pressure	Freedom
Learning new things	Learning new things (choice of activity)	Playfulness
Progression	The experience of making art (taking part in activities and learning new skills)	Transformation
A community	Community (we're all in the same boat)	Acceptance and appreciation
Time	Time (you always want more)	
Place	A safe zone	An oasis or sanctuary
		Structure

\*Our evaluation in 2021 was different – due to the Covid lockdown we were unable to visit **Arts Network** in person so we did not carry out any interviews to explore these themes.

It is interesting that in 2022 five of the six themes seem to be **broadly similar to those from previous 2019 and 2020**, albeit with different names, despite being developed from different approaches: analysis of interviews by **CERT** researchers in 2019 and 2020; and collective discussion of postcards by **Arts Network** member co-researchers in 2022. The different names in 2022 are due to the thematic analysis being carried out largely by **Arts Network member co-researchers who chose their own language**. This similarity in findings from different research approaches indicates a high level of validity in our findings across the years.

However, the differences are interesting: **previously the 'time' theme emerged** from members expressing a wish to have more time at the studio. This **was not raised in the same way by members this year** – the reason for this is not immediately obvious – it may be related to people re-adjusting to face-to-face sessions after the lockdowns, or reflecting the increase in the number of sessions on offer due to having more workshop facilitators.

Another interesting difference is in the **emergence of a new theme, 'structure'**, which we have not identified before. The reasons for this are unclear – it may be related to our different research methods, or because the impact of Covid made structure matter more to members, in terms of people losing and then needing to regain a routine to their weeks.

### 3.4 2022 MEMBER STATISTICS

#### Age

18 - 39	45
40 - 64	68
65+	8

#### Gender identity

Identify as female	75
Identify as male	34
Identify as transgender	1
no data	11

#### Borough

Bromley	4
Croydon	2
Greenwich	3
Lambeth	4
Lewisham	98
Southwark	10

### 3.5 SOCIAL MEDIA REACH AND ONLINE PROVISION

Platform	2021	2022	Change
Facebook	467	513	+46
Twitter	544	679	+135
Instagram	820	1,000	+180
YouTube	No data	303	

These data indicate that **Arts Network** have steadily increased their social media following over the last year.

**Arts Network** offers **two Zoom sessions per week** for members who find it harder to come to the workroom.

**Arts Network stopped making new YouTube videos** in Jan 2022 due to the transition back to in person delivery. The archive is available on the **Arts Network [YouTube channel](#)** and **[website](#)**.

The **Stay Connected** digital archive is available on our **[website](#)**.

### 3.6 NEW LOCATIONS: SOUTHWARK AND LONDON BRIDGE

**Arts Network** are moving to a **new purpose-built site in Southwark in 2024-5**. This is currently awaiting planning permission. They intend to **maintain a base in Lewisham**. Because of this move, **Arts Network** has sought to **establish a presence within their 'new' local community**. In partnership with an organisation called 'Art Academy', **Arts Network** has been offering workshops one day a week at London Bridge for 10-15 people. Beginning in February 2022, this has been extremely popular. **Arts Network** also gained members when another organisation, Cooltan, closed.

**Arts Network** have recently received funding from the Peabody Community Fund. This will be used to move these weekly sessions to Darwin Court, a Peabody Community Centre located very close to the new building **Arts Network** will move into. This move will allow **Arts Network** to **continue developing their presence** within the local community they will be working with into the future.

## 3.7 EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

### 3.7.1 South London and the Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM)

Considerable connections with SLAM have been maintained, including **SLAM training Arts Network members in volunteering**, and **using Stay Connected magazine in Occupational Therapy** activities.

### 3.7.2 Horniman Museum

Arts Network have a long-standing relationship with **Horniman Museum** in Forest Hill. Previously **Arts Network** workshop facilitators delivered arts activities for the public at the museum. More recently, **Arts Network members who have been trained in facilitation have delivered these sessions** independently and have **been paid for it**. This has been judged to be a massive success.

We contacted the **Community Engagement Coordinator** at Horniman Museum. He commented:

*"We have a **long and productive partnership history** with Arts Network and have worked on many projects together, from event programming to museum exhibitions. We both have a really **good idea of how the other one works** which makes everything much easier in terms of partnership. For this reason, Arts Network **are one of our most reliable partners** even for fairly last-minute proposals – we also know that the **ethos and leadership is aligned with the way we approach things too**. We **value the partnership highly** and are **always open to fresh ideas and new ways of working together**."*

*In terms of future relationship, what we've been exploring recently is how to work in ways at the museum which is more Arts Network-led. We have been **piloting an approach where facilitators and members of Arts Network receive object-training and then develop and deliver public workshops using our handling collection**. So, instead of working to a set brief from the Horniman, **developing the content of public sessions themselves** and also holding the space with the public with less mediation from us. This has been a good mutual opportunity because Arts Network have also recently run training for their members in facilitations so this is a great way to practise those new skills."*

### 3.7.3 Dulwich Picture Gallery

**Dulwich Picture Gallery** worked with **Arts Network** members and new participants to **engage with an exhibition through seven creative workshops**. This culminated in a group exhibition of work made during Creativity and Wellbeing Week, which was open to the public. This was a popular project and we are currently developing a similar programme for Spring 2023.



### 3.7.4 Wild Cat Wilderness

This is a community green space in Catford. **Arts Network** members were engaged in designing and building a **Gaudi inspired mosaic bench** for the peaceful orchard area. This was funded by Borough of Culture.

### 3.7.5 Tower Bridge

An artist in residence at **Tower Bridge**, Melissa Scott-Miller, **delivered workshops for Arts Network members in observational drawing**. One workshop took place at **Arts Network** and the second at **Tower Bridge**. During her residency, Melissa Scott-Miller created five oil paintings, three of which are going to be auctioned and the proceeds donated to **Arts Network**.

### 3.7.6 Thames 21

This partnership delivered **six 'walks and wades' sessions in local rivers**. The project educated members on the geography of our local waterways and resident wildlife, including eels which have recently been re-introduced ([Figure 56](#)).

### 3.7.7 Hear Myself Think

This was a series of **six online creative writing workshops** facilitated by six different writers. The outcome of the project is a series of podcasts written by the facilitators and an online archive of participant writing.

Figure 56: Thames 21 'walk and wades'



### 3.8 NATIONAL NETWORK OF ARTS AND MENTAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS

The national network which was established during the pandemic has continued to thrive. They have had their first face-to-face meeting in **Birmingham**.

It includes **sixteen arts-based organisations from around the country** – some are community groups or charities. The group meets every second month with the intention of sharing hopes, expertise and resources.

**Artlift** (Gloucestershire) - <https://artlift.org>

**Arts and Minds** (Cambridge)- <https://artsandminds.org.uk>

**Arts Well** (Cornwall) - <https://arts-well.com/>

**Borderland Voices** (Leek) - <http://borderlandvoices.org.uk/>

**Converge** (York) - <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/Converge/>

**Creative Shift** (Bristol) - <https://www.creativeshift.org.uk/>

**Flourish** (Sheffield)- <https://sheffieldflourish.co.uk>

**Inspirative Arts** (Derby) - <https://www.inspirativearts.co.uk>

**Key Changes** (London) - <https://www.keychanges.org.uk/>

**Orb Community Arts** - <http://orb-arts.org>

**Pioneer projects** – <https://pioneerprojects.org.uk>

**Red Earth** (Birmingham) - <https://www.redearthcollective.org.uk>

**Sampad** (Birmingham) - <https://www.sampad.org.uk>

Through this came some **work around diversifying ‘creative mental health’** – South East London is one of the most diverse areas in the country. **Arts Network want this diversity to be reflected in the board, staff and membership**, and are seeking bespoke diversity training.

Another **area of interest is social prescribing** – including what counts as social prescribing and where the money comes from in this field.

We contacted some of the organisations which linked into the network. **Artlift** commented:

*“The network provided **invaluable peer support** at a time when we all felt anxious (due to lack of clear guidelines/sector steer) during the Pandemic. It has also been **great to undertake training & reflection together**, pushing forwards thinking around how we can address sector equality.*

*Going forwards, there’s **scope to further explore each other’s models of working**, for joined up advocacy/levelling up across the country (as funding/support is so patchy); also to continue the work we’d like to do around diversifying the workforce.”*

## 3.9 TRIPS

### 3.9.1 What benefits members get from trips

Arts Network organises **regular trips to museums, galleries and exhibitions**. These trips seem to be **particularly important** to the members which go on them. One member co-researcher described how it had increased their confidence and feelings of group membership:

*“Going on trips **increases confidence and helps you feel part of the group, especially because you meet new people** who attend workshops on different days to you.”*

Some member co-researchers talked of how the trips enabled them to go to places which they otherwise could not have gone to:

*“It allows me to **go on trips that I would otherwise not be able to do.**”*

Others talked of the importance to them of getting to know people better on the trips:

*“[It’s interesting that you get to know people better on the trips] **yeah, because it’s a different environment... you get used to a different environment when you do go on different things that you do outside.... A change of scenery. I think it’s quite exciting when you go on trips or something to look forward to.**”*

*“Especially if you go on outings as well... you **get to know people a bit better.**”*

One member co-researcher articulated that they felt the trips give something different to just attending the workshop:

*“The **trips give you something quite different than coming here** [to Arts Network]. **Here, it’s like you’ve got activities to do. It’s very focused... the trips get you going outside... it’s funny, maybe [you might] want to work towards it...**”*

### 3.9.2 Barriers to attending trips

However, some member co-researchers described barriers which stop them from being able to go on trips, one commented about **difficulties coping with public transport**:

*“Yeah, it’s more scary because I don’t take trains... **unfortunately I can’t travel with the group, I have to go by car or get someone to take me** [so getting to the trips is the barrier?] **yeah, it’s getting there.**”*

One member co-researcher suggested this **could be resolved by hiring a minibus**, however, another member said **they preferred public transport**. This suggests that Arts Network could aim to offer both public and private ways of getting to trips, however, we acknowledge that this might not always be practical.

Finally, not all members go on the trips. It is not always clear whether this is because **they choose not** to because they are **not interested**, or whether there is **some anxiety or problem preventing them from going**. It might be worthwhile speaking to members who have not attended trips to find out whether there is a way to resolve a specific challenge the member has.

### 3.9.3 This year there have been trips to:

*Masterpieces from Buckingham Palace* at **The Queen's Gallery**

**Tower Bridge** (this was a celebratory and 'thank you' trip for members who completed our co-facilitator training)

**Kew Gardens** – visit as part of Kew's community week, included free creative workshops

**Horniman Museum** – included visit to Butterfly House ([Figure 57](#))

**Tower Bridge** (as part of project with **Tower Bridge** and their artist in residence Melissa Scott-Miller)

**Eltham Palace** – house and gardens ([Figure 58](#))

**Tate Modern** (visit with participants in our outreach group based near **London Bridge**)

Figure 57: Horniman Museum visit



Figure 58 (i-ii): Eltham Palace visit



### 3.9.4 Future visits planned:

**Mexican Embassy** to visit an exhibition on Day of the Dead festival (solo show by Paula R Rodriguez who used to work at **Arts Network**)

**Museum of Migration in Lewisham Shopping Centre**

*Japan: Courts and Culture* at **The Queen's Gallery** – this visit will include a creative mindfulness workshop

Figure 59: Visit to Paula R Rodriguez exhibition - Nov 22





Figure 60: Showcase exhibition at Ninth Life

### 3.10 EXHIBITIONS

#### 3.10.1 Exhibitions in Arts Network's gallery in 2022

A showcase of work created by members during Shibori workshops (a Japanese dye technique)

Member exhibition: a vibrant display of painting and drawing work by two members

A showcase of work created during the **Dulwich Picture Gallery** project inspired by Helen Frankenthaler

A display of work by two members inspired by nature (from Nov 2022)

#### 3.10.2 External Exhibitions in 2022

##### 3.10.2.1 Dulwich Picture Gallery

A display of work created during the partnership project, including a wishing tree located in the gallery gardens (Figure 62).

##### 3.10.2.2 Ninth Life, Catford

This was a varied showcase of work by **Arts Network** members and projects we have run with the wider community (Figure 60).

##### 3.10.2.3 Billboards

Two billboards designed by the social prescribing group were on display in **Brockley and Forest Hill**, to coincide with **World Mental Health Day 2022** (Figure 61).



Figure 61: Billboards

### 3.11 THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROJECT

In July 2022, Arts Network took part in the **Thriving Communities Project**. Funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund, the project was coordinated by **Entelechy Arts**, working on behalf of a consortium of culture and health organisations in Lewisham. The organisation **Connected Communities** handled referrals through **social prescribing**.

**Arts Network** was one of twelve organisations to take part: the **Thriving Communities Project** received 33 referrals in all, nine of these referrals were **to the Arts Networks' project**. This was an **eight-week workshop entitled 'Outsider'** which supported participants to create art using techniques that were new to them. From artwork and discussions during the workshops, two billboards were produced and displayed on two Lewisham roads for **World Mental Health Day 2022**.

**Arts Network** identified that many of the applicants would be able to access **Arts Network** through their current referral process. However, **Arts Network** considers social prescribing to be a potential stream for which members can refer on to the **Arts Network** service if funding can be secured.

## 3.12 WORKSHOP LEADER INTERVIEW

We interviewed two workshop facilitators and the communication and engagement lead.

### 3.12.1 How it's been since lockdown: trial and error

Covid brought about **huge changes** in the ways in which workshops are run at **Arts Network**. This includes **working with massive technical barriers** with members unable to use phones and computers. Both of the facilitators we interviewed **joined Arts Network during the pandemic** and as such they have moved from initially running online workshops using Zoom, creating YouTube videos and contributing to **Stay Connected** magazine to running in-person workshops back in the studio at **Arts Network**. They explained:

*"We don't know what it [workshops] was like before, really, apart from the little bits from people who've worked here for longer or members who've mentioned things."*

As they were never exposed to how workshops were organised and delivered before Covid, they have been able to **develop new ways to approach workshops** – *"we've had to find our own way through"* – the facilitators were clear in our interview that this is ongoing a process:

*"[of] **trial and error**, testing to see what works. **Good communication** with management – given space to make things **'your own'**."*

*"A chance to grow and **see what works**."*

In the past, before Covid, most of the session delivery focused on delivering structured workshop courses learning a specific technique for a set number of weeks. In the past this was successful, however, in the post-covid world the facilitators reported **struggling to get engagement** from members. A problem was identified where members who missed a session of a course felt they couldn't return because they had missed too much. They also observed that after the workshop re-opened, some **members who hadn't come for a long time started coming** and *"people weren't really sure what to do."* To manage both of these problems, the **facilitators started offering a quick introduction to a new exercise or medium each week** – something quick a member could do *"to get people back into the habit of working again... introduce new ideas to people... get people back into the flow... [when] you've not been here for two years."* The facilitators felt this process was a great way to: *"get people talking to each other and integrating and sharing again and connecting."*

A facilitator described the challenge of getting people back to the studio:

*"it's been a lot about people really **coming to terms of getting out again**... That's been **a big challenge for a lot of people**... we've had people coming back here and it's all different... we've been dealing with a kind of relearning.... Having experienced isolation, I guess, relearning social ways... refamiliarizing yourself*



*with it, because I think there was **a lot more nervousness from people... people haven't been out and it's scary...** we're in a very changeable place... we're having to react."*

*"For a lot of people, **the challenge was getting out again** – period of re-learning and refamiliarizing."*

There has not been a rush to get back to the workshop since it reopened: **"it's been a bit of a slow slog getting people back [into the studio] ... we've had people trickle back in"**, thus they continue to offer online things to a "core group" of online users who they reach on a regular basis where it **"meets a particular need"** for some members who cannot leave the house for whatever reason. For example, on two days a week they offer a workshop in the studio and set up a computer with Zoom so that people can join in from home – this has been successful with people in the studio interacting with those online. These **efforts to get people back into the studio are beginning to prove successful**, with some online users now attending the studio and/or going on trips.

### 3.12.2 Supporting members who miss sessions

Figure 24 indicates that **"not needing to attend regularly"** is important to almost all questionnaire respondents. The need for flexibility was raised by the workshop leaders: a common consideration is how they should respond when a member has missed sessions – sometimes people don't attend for long periods. Arts Network acknowledge that this is because they **are working with people with fluctuating mental health** – often severe and enduring mental health challenges. It is easy to understand why **this group of people may struggle to attend sometimes**. The challenges of Covid may have compounded this pre-existing adversity, making it even harder for struggling members to return. In response, Arts Network keeps membership open if they say they want to still be a member. A facilitator commented:

*"I think it's quite **common for people not to come in for a number of weeks, maybe months, and then return, so in theory...** it's still open unless they definitely say no thanks."*

The facilitator continued to describe how they approach this:

*"making sure that they **feel they [members] can come back in** – so **sending them messages, giving them a call and see how they're doing**, we've been trying to do that a bit more now."*

### 3.13 MANAGEMENT INTERVIEWS

Interview with the founder and CEO, Strategic Director and the Programme Manager.

#### 3.13.1 How it's been since lockdown

**Arts Network** is **still processing the challenges of Covid**. At the beginning of lockdown, **Arts Network** identified that 33 members have no access to a computer or who were in some way resistant to technology. For these members it was especially **important to remain connected to Arts Network** through phone calls and **Stay Connected** magazine.

As mentioned in the workshop facilitator interview, **recovery from the lockdowns has been slow**. There has been a gradual move back into the studio, whilst maintaining online sessions and **Stay Connected** magazine.

There are members who remain **too frightened to leave the house or to use public transport** – considerable effort from staff has been put in to **maintaining a connection** with those members, encouraging them to attend the studio, and exploring what support they might need to manage this.

As the number of attendees has **gradually increased**, they have noticed that the **atmosphere in the workshop has changed** – members appeared to have become **more comfortable** being in a room with other people again, and have been removing their masks inside.

The Strategic Director commented that there is a need to make sure that **Arts Network** does not become too inward looking. There is a **need to maintain an awareness** of the external local and national situation, attending events such as conferences to showcase **Arts Network's** work.

**Arts Network** have found it challenging to **balance the needs of existing members alongside fulfilling our funding obligations** to build up new external networks and relationships, whilst reopening and during a time of great unCERTainty.

#### 3.13.2 Workshop places

Due to Covid, **Arts Network increased the number of sessions** available to members (but with fewer spaces). Since then, **Arts Network** have **steadily increased the size of the groups** in the workshop from 8 to 12 (not quite back to pre-pandemic levels). This means that **Arts Network** are **now offering more workshop spaces** than pre-covid times. The managers feel that this has helped the relaxed atmosphere in the workshop return.

### 3.13.3 Member workshop facilitators

Another way in which **Arts Network** have increased capacity is **training members to co-facilitate workshops**. So far ten have been trained, and there are plans to train more. They are initially trained and DBS checked by **SLAM** followed by specific training at **Arts Network** over three afternoon sessions. At present:

- One member facilitator regularly attends Tuesday sessions.
- One supports the Art Academy project.
- Five led their own sessions at **The Horniman Museum** for young children and families – people really enjoyed it and learned a lot.
- There were opportunities to co-facilitate partner projects - one member co-facilitated project with **Dulwich Picture Gallery**.
- There were opportunities to co-design and co-facilitate ongoing sessions - two members currently leading crafting afternoons.
- The Operations Manager wants to **increase capacity** to train more member facilitators/volunteers. The process to becoming a volunteer can be part of a **member's progress plan** if they are keen to do this.

### 3.13.4 Diversifying courses offered

In previous evaluations, **CERT** suggested that **Arts Network** could explore offering a **more diverse range of courses**. They have addressed this with a **new six-week creative writing course** over Zoom (prior to lockdown there was creative writing at the Dragon Café, but it did not survive). In this course each session addressed a different writer, including a poet from America. It **proved popular with members, with really good attendance**, including members that don't usually come and some members coming to the **Arts Network** site to join the Zoom call as they can't do it from home.

Partnership working has offered **opportunities to diversify**, for example, creative writing and other projects with **Dulwich Picture Gallery** and **Tower Bridge**.

### 3.13.5 Staffing

The managers described changes over the year:

Staff turnover during the lockdown period meant all current workshop leader staff had no experience of how things were done pre-covid. As such, they had to find their own way to run workshops (initially online), and had a new set of skills with the ability to offer new classes.

- Two extra facilitators to cover Lambeth and **Southwark** were employed.
- Operations manager on parental leave September 2021 to June 2022.
- They are revising the management structure supported by a consultant from City Bridge, A new Chair was recruited in August/September. They are seeking more Trustees.
- Seeking to get extra resources into the Board of Trustees, with expertise in human resources, marketing and finance.
- CEO reducing hours from three to two days per week.
- Operations managers are taking on work previously done by the CEO.
- Employing a dedicated communications employee means **Arts Network** is now much better at getting things out on social media.
- Need a project manager to oversee the move to **Southwark** and capacity build within existing roles .

#### 3.13.5.1 Current Staff:

**Mo Saunders** - CEO/Founder - 2 days per week from 1<sup>st</sup> October PAYE

**Matthew Couper** - Development Director 1 days – Freelance. *Left on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022*

**Em Greyharbour** - Operations Manager – 4 Days PAYE (Maternity leave from August 2021 – June 22.

**Charlotte Wilson** – (Operations Manager maternity cover till June 22) Then appointed Programme Manager from June 2022 - 4 days PAYE

**Lucy Thomas** – Facilitator, Member and Gallery Coordinator 4 days PAYE.

**Jannat Hussain** – Facilitator 2 days - PAYE 3 days from October 2022

**Declan McGill** – Communications and Engagement Lead (21 hours) PAYE

**Ruth Pickard** - Facilitator (Started July 2021) 3 days. *Left September 2022*

**Jasmine Waldorf** - Facilitator 2 days PAYE (Started September 2022)

**Ed Freeman** – Advice and Advocacy – Freelance (2 days per month)

### 3.13.5.2 Trustees

There are 4 active Trustees and a Secretary:

**William Nicholson** - Elected 2nd April 2020 – Chairperson and Finance

**Gill Philips** – Elected June 2015 – Legal and HR

**Kate Emben** – Elected March 2019 – H&S and Member representative.

**Jake Strickland** – Elected March 2019 – IT and Technical Support

**Dave Sullivan** – Elected March 2019 – Long term sickness.

**Claire Morris** (Secretary) – Elected November 2019

### 3.13.6 Funding position

The Strategic Director commented that dealing with the funding situation is a key activity in the next few months:

- **Arts Network** were successful at getting funding during the pandemic.
- Longer-term funding coming to an end next year so there is a need to seek new funding: the intention is to go to funders which they have an existing relationship with – including the Big Lottery Fund and Lewisham council.
- **Arts Network** would like to do a Social Return on Investment calculation but its expense is too great – it would take too much money away from service delivery.

### 3.13.7 Stay Connected magazine, Zoom and YouTube

The external funding gained during lockdown to fund **Stay Connected** magazine has now ended and the magazine is **now funded via service delivery resource**. It is seen as particularly important for members who can't attend in person or online: it is **described by some members as a 'life saver' and 'lifeline'**.

Because of the resource and effort required in creating it, the **frequency of Stay Connected publication has reduced** – it now alternates every other month with a briefer Newsletter (sent to members only) so that members continue to receive something each month.

**Stay Connected** and Zoom are **creating a life for themselves beyond Covid**. Managers see this as a positive thing which opens the up **Arts Network** to a difference audience, creating different opportunities.

Using Zoom, **Arts Network** are able to **increase their capacity to offer courses**, for example, Zoom sessions can be used in two ways:

- Workshops in the studio can be set up using Zoom so that member can join in with the session from home.
- A Zoom course can run at the same time as a completely different workshop is taking place – two different courses running simultaneously.

**Stay Connected** magazine is still used by OTs (including in the local mental health hospital), and by other organisations, such as community centres in Lewisham.

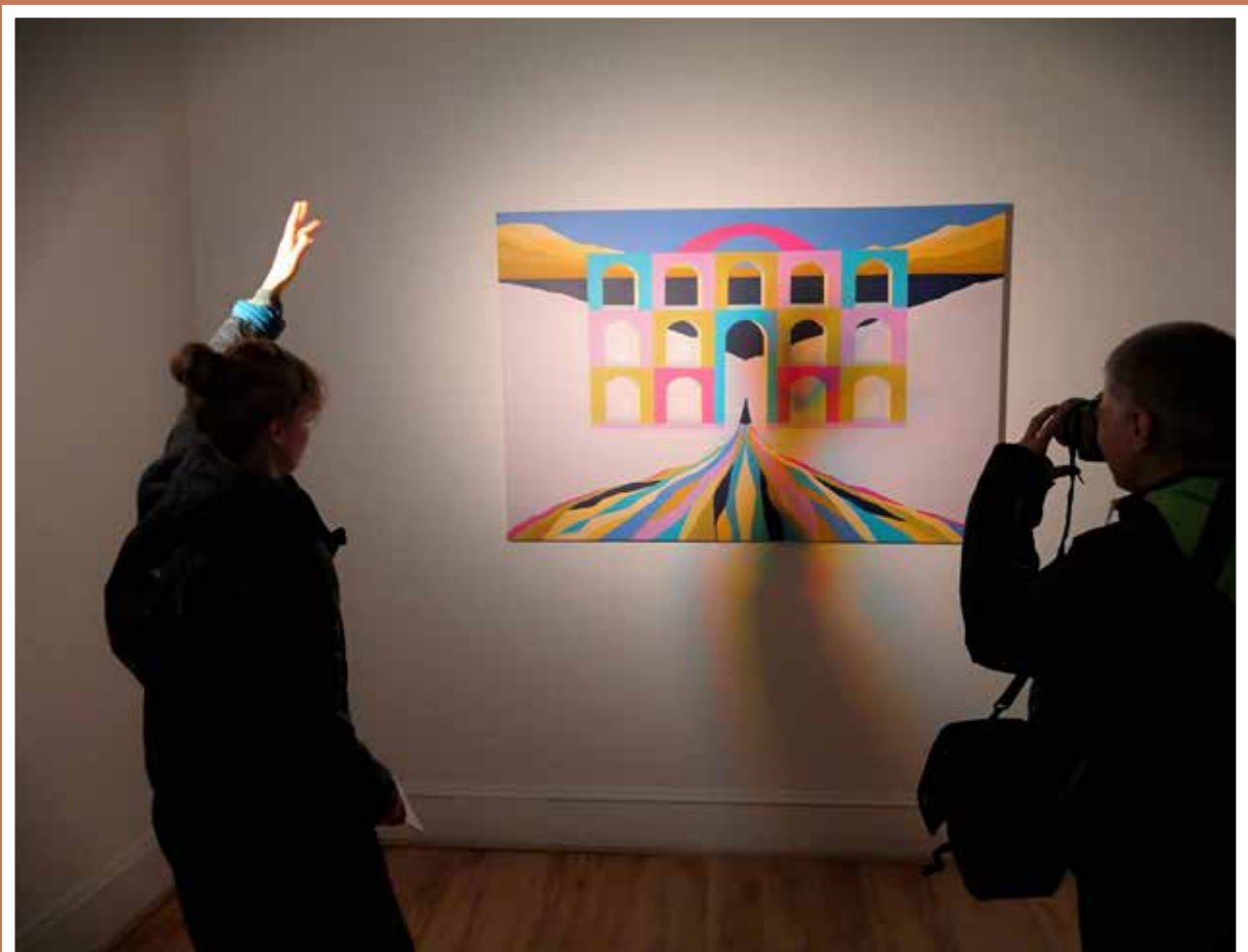
**Arts Network** now have a **library of YouTube videos** available online and the **Stay Connected back catalogue** is available online.

### 3.13.8 New members since Covid

Welcoming new members was **very challenging during Covid** as **Arts Network** was **unable to do their usual assessments**. There were 17 referrals during the lockdown period: they included new members on the basis of accessing online sessions and **Stay Connected** magazine. Ten went on to attend sessions in the workshop.

In the past year there were 59 referrals.

Figure 62: Visit to Paula R Rodriguez exhibition - Nov 22



## 4. Statement of Finance

INCOME	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Balance Carried from previous year	£39,960.00	£55,046.67		
City Bridge	£41,100.00	£41,100.00		
Pegasus (unconfirmed in yellow)	£20,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Igen (Subject to CERT report) Unconfirmed from 2024	£34,220.00	£34,220.00		
Garfield Weston	£10,000.00	£10,000.00		
Lottery Community Fund (unconfirmed from 2024 in yellow)	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00
Maudsley Final payment received.	£3,118.00			
Lewisham London Borough of Culture Projects	£6,000.00			
Pegasus (unconfirmed in yellow)	£20,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Peabody starting January 2023		£10,000.00	£10,000.00	
Trusts & Foundations (unconfirmed)				
Studio Hires (coop)	£8,000.00	£8,000.00	£8,000.00	
Workshops	£500.00	£500.00	£500.00	£1,500.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£232,898.00</b>	<b>£213,820.00</b>	<b>£138,500.00</b>	<b>£121,500.00</b>



## 5. How Arts Network Addressed 2021's Ambitions and Recommendations

2021's ambitions and recommendations	Actions taken
Delivering new programmes of work in Lambeth and Southwark.	<p>In partnership with an organisation called 'Art Academy', Arts Network offer workshops one day a week at London Bridge for 10–15 people. These sessions have now come to an end however we are beginning conversations around how the partnership could continue long term.</p> <p>Dulwich Picture Gallery project. Stockwell Park pop-ups.</p>
Planning for move to a new main base in Southwark in 2023.	This is ongoing.
Have popups in Lewisham and Lambeth.	<p>Lewisham: Public creative workshops at The Horniman Museum and for People's Day festival.</p> <p>Lambeth: Two public drop-in printmaking sessions at Stockwell Park Community Centre and eight-week project at Dulwich Picture Gallery, engaging existing members and new participants.</p> <p>This will be focused on after the move to Southwark.</p>
Extending workshop delivery at main base.	This has been achieved, with more workshop places available, coupled with online options.
Continuing delivery of Stay Connected Programme.	This is being maintained, with adjustments due to returning to the workshop.
Look into why the videos are less popular, and if there is anything which could be done to make them more popular.	This has been seen as less important now in-person sessions have returned: Arts Network have stopped making YouTube videos.

<p>Continued development of partnerships opportunities.</p>	<p>National Network of arts and mental health organisations                  Horniman Museum                  Dulwich Picture Gallery                  Wildcat Wilderness                  Tower Bridge                  Thames 21                  Hear Myself Think</p>
<p>Taking part in Lewisham's London Borough of Culture programme 2022.</p>	<p>Arts Network hosted an Artist in Residence for a day, who facilitated workshops in Chinese calligraphy for members and the public.</p> <p>Arts Network were funded through the programme to create a Gaudi inspired mosaic bench at Wild Cat Wilderness - a local community greenspace.</p> <p>Arts Network piloted a social prescribing group in partnership with Entelechy Arts, resulting in two billboards displaying a positive message related to mental health in the local area, to coincide with World Mental Health Day.</p> <p>Arts Network hosted a drama workshop led by Teatro Vivo which explored the climate emergency and what members think Lewisham should be doing to act.</p> <p>Arts Network had a stall and collaborative creative workshop at Lewisham People's Day festival.</p>

<p>Social media could also be considered as a tool for advertising Arts Network, to increase awareness of what they offer and to raise money.</p>	<p>Arts Network have steadily increased the number of social media followers they have.</p>
<p>Find ways of supporting members who are struggling to get back to the workshop - perhaps mentors who could offer individual support to those who need it.</p>	<p>This is ongoing.</p>
<p>Increase the number of workshop staff</p>	<p>This was achieved, and is ongoing as Arts Network continues to grow.</p>
<p>Seek to carry out a Social Return on Investment calculation to explore how much money they potentially save other services.</p>	<p>Arts Network would like to have a Social Return on Investment calculation done, but it is not financially feasible from their own funding as it would take too much resource away from actual service delivery.</p>
<p>Consolidate the successes they have had over 2021 and not stretch themselves too thinly by over-expanding and dilute what they do in the workshop.</p>	<p>This is ongoing.</p>

## 6. Suggestions for Future Development

### 6.1 CONSOLIDATION

In this past year, as we emerged from lockdown, **Arts Network** have continued to **consolidate their current offering** rather than seeking to expand. This seems to be a prudent approach to continue into the coming year, especially considering the current financial situation.

### 6.2 CONTINUED COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Arts Network** has been successful in extending its reach into the community, especially in **Southwark**. **Continuing local community outreach** may be valuable in terms of letting the community know what **Arts Network** is and does, opening the organisation up to more links and collaborations.

### 6.3 CAREFULLY MANAGING THE MOVE TO SOUTHWARK

As they get closer to moving to their new site, **Arts Network's** intentions to gradually increase their engagement with the community in **Southwark** seems wise. However, the period of change over to a new site will be a **time of uncertainty for members** – in our evaluation, several expressed in general terms their **fear of 'losing' Arts Network** (not in relation to any discussion directly about the move). As such, it would be sensible to be **careful about how they communicate changes to members**, including what they will be able to offer in Lewisham after the move, as members may already have considerable anxieties around the process.

### 6.4 SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

As we have suggested in previous years, a Social Return on Investment calculation could be extremely valuable to **Arts Network**. It might be fruitful to **seek funding specifically for this**, rather than taking money away from service delivery.

### 6.5 LOOKING AGAIN AT TRIPS OUT

Members talked a lot about **trips and who can access them** – getting to the destination seems to be a key challenge. Some members prefer public transport while others prefer to drive/private transport like a minibus. Thus, it may be helpful for members to be able **to offer both ways of getting to the venue**. Members also suggested that it might be worth talking to members who have never been on trips to find out whether this is because they choose not to and are not interested, or whether there is some **anxiety or problem preventing them from going** which they can be supported with.

## 6.6 EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO ZOOM, STAY CONNECTED AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Zoom, **Stay Connected** and social media offer considerable opportunity to **reach new audiences and sources of funding**. For example, being commissioned to deliver sessions over Zoom for other organisations – these sessions could even be led by **Arts Network** members.

**Increasing the circulation of Stay Connected** and their **social media following** continues to be a useful way of expanding general awareness of what **Arts Network** does and why it is important, and may even offer new opportunities for funding.

## 7. Summary and Conclusions

**Arts Network** continues to be **highly successful** in offering a **safe and nurturing environment** to highly vulnerable people living with severe and enduring mental health challenges. It is clear that at **Arts Network**, **members can use creativity to achieve personal goals, gain confidence and skills, and develop healthy and supportive relationships.**

Our data indicate that at **Arts Network**, members feel happier; more relaxed; more sociable; more optimistic; more confident; find it easier to talk to people; feel more useful; feel like they are contributing something; feel safe and respected; and have reduced feelings of loneliness. For some members, to some extent these changes carry over to their lives outside of Arts.

These changes are likely to have a **profound impact on a member's mental health**: many members expressed that **Arts Network** helps with the stresses of life; improved their wellbeing; and improved their self-esteem. Many describe it quite literally as **'a life saver'**: giving them something to live for.

Members value the learning opportunities; the chance of distraction from their challenges; feeling part of a community; making friends; and having something to look forward to each week.

The workshop and management staff continue to **work extremely hard to offer a high level of service quality**, and have shown a great deal of flexibility and responsiveness in finding their route out of the pandemic.

Similar themes to previous years were identified using the thematic analysis of the postcards although this year they were named by the member co-researchers rather than **CERT**: an oasis/sanctuary; playfulness; acceptance and appreciation; transformation; freedom; and structure. It is interesting that 'structure' has emerged as a theme this year after the turmoil of the pandemic.

The move to the new site will have to be carefully communicated to existing members as it is likely some will find the change unsettling or difficult.



Figure 62: Wishing Tree at Dulwich Picture Gallery

