

# WHEELWORKS

## I PROGRAMME EXTERNAL EVALUATION APRIL 2023

**Review of iProgramme, funded by Children in Need, and  
delivered by WheelWorks Arts from April 2020 to March 2023**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of the iProgramme over the past three years. Without the support and dedication of the following individuals and organisations, the programme would not have achieved its objectives and made a positive impact on the lives of the participants.

First and foremost, we would like to thank our main funder, Children in Need (CIN), for their funding support over the three years. Their commitment to funding the iProgramme, especially during the challenging period of the Covid-19 pandemic, has been instrumental in its implementation and sustainability.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the three additional funders who provided funding for the project delivery costs in years two and three. They are Halifax Foundation, Awards for All and The Victoria Homes Trust. Your financial support enabled us to reach a broader audience and deliver meaningful arts activities to a wider range of beneficiaries.



Belfast City Council

WHEELWORKS



the Victoria Homes Trust

Victoria Homes Trust - improving the lives of children in Northern Ireland since 1982

We are grateful to all the participants and participating groups/organisations who partnered with us on this journey. Your collaboration and commitment to improving the lives of looked after and trauma experienced children and young people have been essential. The following groups deserve recognition for their invaluable contributions:

1. **ARCHWAYS**
2. **FCA**
3. **VOYPIC**
4. **NEW START EDUCATION CENTRE**
5. **PATHWAYS EAST**
6. **PATHWAYS SHANKILL**
7. **PATHWAYS CITY CENTRE**
8. **INCLUDE YOUTH**
9. **PATRICIAN YOUTH CENTRE**

Robust monitoring and evaluations played a crucial role in capturing evidence and reporting on the outcomes of the programme. We would like to thank the staff, artists, facilitators, and volunteers who actively participated in the evaluation process. Your input and feedback helped us monitor progress, make necessary adjustments, and ensure the programme stayed on track and achieve its objectives.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the parents/guardian, support staff, and foster families who provided valuable insights on the progress of the participants outside of the programme. Your collaboration and feedback were vital in understanding the broader impact of the iProgramme and mapping the individual journeys of the young people.

Lastly, we want to acknowledge the young people themselves who participated in the iProgramme. Your courage, creativity, and willingness to engage in the arts have been truly inspiring. Your creative work, stories and experiences have shaped the programme and are at the heart of its success.

**Farah Chowdhury**  
CEO, Wheelworks Arts

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document evaluates the iProgramme project, delivered and managed Wheelworks Arts (WWA) between April 2020 and March 2023. It was funded mainly by Children in Need, with several other charities also providing support with project costs.

WWA is a leading youth arts charity that, since 1995, has been working with young people aged 4 to 25 from communities across Northern Ireland. It exists to support young people's social and cultural development through innovative community-based programmes, using a creative fusion of traditional and digital media to harness the arts for learning and change and give young people a voice.

The iProgramme was a three-year initiative that used a range of creative activities to improve the confidence, self-esteem and social participation of young people who were looked after and/or affected by trauma, i.e., in the care of support organisations or a family member due to abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction. Many of the young people involved in the project live in areas of high deprivation, and have experience of poverty and poor housing.

The iProgramme provided an opportunity for these young people to engage in creative activities that fostered positive friendships, increased confidence, and encouraged them to try new activities and develop new skills. Art-led activities helped them to discover their creative passions and strengths with an increasingly positive mindset, to help them believe in themselves and their abilities.

Each week, young people were guided by artists and youth facilitators to co-design interactive and fun group sessions in a variety of artforms, such as arts and crafts, animation, music production, photography, and virtual reality (VR). Many sessions used leading-edge technology, thereby introducing the participants to technology they otherwise may not have been able to access.

The iProgramme project was a success, and delivered effective outcomes throughout the three years of its duration. The programme reached 188 'disadvantaged' individuals, twice the target number set out in the original application.

In addition, the project demonstrated a major accomplishment in affecting positive change in the young people that attended. Over the three years of the project:

- **60.1% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCED 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS' IN DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE.**
- **72.5% OF PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCED 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS' IN 'TRYING NEW THINGS'.**
- **54.5% OF YOUNG PEOPLE MADE 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS' IN 'IMPROVED BEHAVIOUR'.**

The iProgramme demonstrated that arts-based creative activities can be a highly effective medium in helping children develop 'soft skills', such as confidence and a willingness to try new things, but also in helping them to engage, discuss and explore their own challenges. The creative activities enabled the young people to discover and experiment with new activities and experiences, which, for many, were new and exciting. It also offered some normality and an opportunity to engage with other similarly experienced peers. This was hugely valuable, as it helped them to be themselves, and, without fear of being judged, they were able to tell their stories and express their thoughts. The programme created a supportive space for this cohort of young people that allowed them to engage in group activities that assisted in improving their behaviours as they learned how to work together, communicate effectively, and build friendships with others.

Projects like the iProgramme make a positive difference to children and young people whose prospects are poorer than their peers. The number of 'looked-after' children in Northern Ireland is around 2,800.<sup>1</sup> It is long-known that the educational outcomes of this group are significantly poorer than those of other children.<sup>2</sup> Most of the differences in student progress at post-primary school are thought to be attributable to student background and the home learning environment.<sup>3</sup> While the iProgramme is not

a social panacea for the wider educational, mental health and home life problems that many participants on the programme faced, the evidence from this evaluation suggests that such programmes can have a positive impact with the majority of participants. Further academic research is required into the longer-term effectiveness, nature, and longevity of these changes, but the evidence presented here suggests that such interventions have positive short-term impacts which may be life-changing for some.

# INTRODUCTION

This document evaluates the iProgramme project that Wheelworks Arts (WWA) developed, delivered, and managed between April 2020 and March 2023.



WWA is a leading youth arts charity in Northern Ireland that, since 1995, has been working with young people aged 4 to 25 from communities across the province. It exists to support children and young people's social and cultural development through accessible and innovative community-based programmes which provide a creative fusion of traditional and digital art forms, harnessing the arts for learning and change and giving young

people a voice (for more information, see Appendix 1).

The iProgramme was predominantly funded by Children in Need (CIN), and aimed to use a range of digital and traditional artforms to improve the confidence and self-esteem of children and young people who may have been in care and/or had experienced trauma.

This document explores the learning and challenges in implementing the iProgramme, and the outcomes that WWA delivered for the participants in the iProgramme during its three-year duration.<sup>4</sup> It is an internal report drafted in-house designed to help WWA learn from its work. It was thought there would be value sharing these learnings with professionals, organisations and academics. The evaluation explores five areas:

1. **TARGET GROUPS: DID THE PROGRAMME REACH ITS INTENDED AUDIENCE? WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN REACHING SUCH A TARGET GROUP?**
2. **OUTCOMES: DID WWA ACHIEVE ITS INITIAL AIMS FOR THE IPROGRAMME?**
3. **EFFICACY: DID THE INTERVENTIONS WORK, AND IF SO, WHY?**
4. **LESSONS: WHAT DID WWA LEARN FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAMME?**
5. **CONCLUSIONS: HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE OVERALL PROGRAMME? IS THERE A NEED FOR SUCH PROGRAMMES IN THE FUTURE? ARE THERE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK?**



This report was compiled from activity data collected by WWA project co-ordinators during the three-year life of the project. A variety of qualitative and quantitative measures were employed, including surveys; regular contact with attenders, their carers, and professional staff working with them; and attendance records (for more details, see Appendix 2).

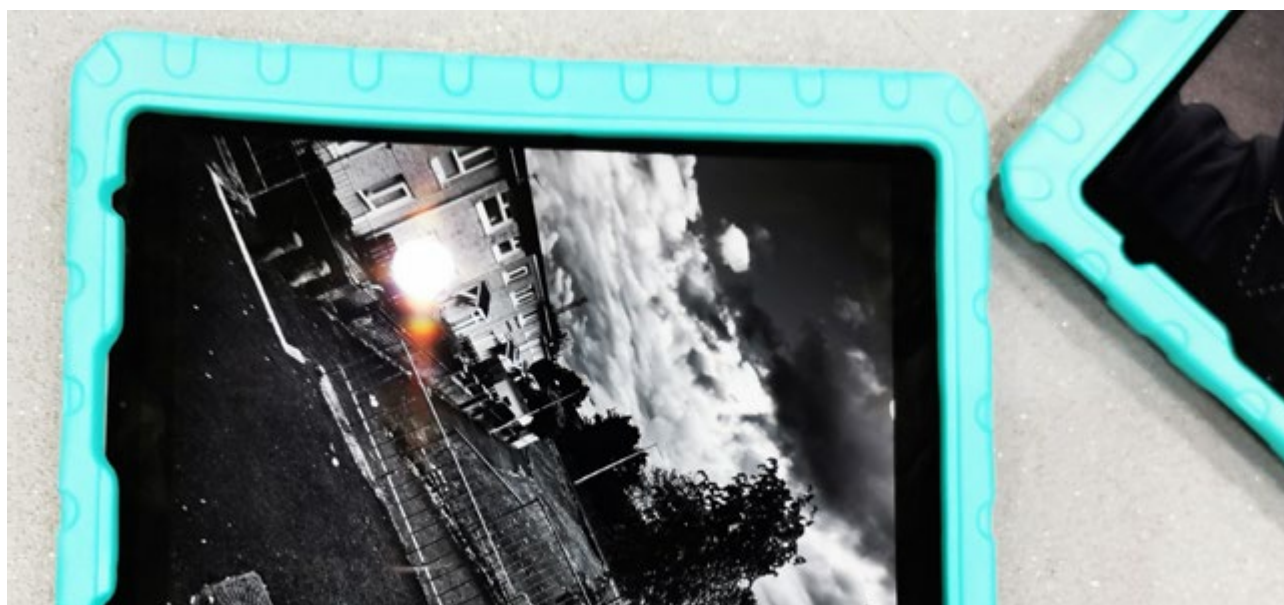


# THE IPROGRAMME

The iProgramme was a three-year work stream run by WWA that aimed to use a range of digital and traditional arts to improve the confidence, self-esteem, and activity of children and young people who may have been in care and/or had experienced trauma. It started in April 2020 and ended in March 2023, and was funded by several charities, but predominantly, Children in Need.

Many of the children that the iProgramme engaged with were traumatised due to abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction. Entry into care is usually a traumatic experience, and creating a sense of belonging, and emotional security for those children affected is important to their health and wellbeing. As well as this, many of the young people involved in the project had experience of living with high levels of deprivation, poverty, and poor housing. Consequently, the iProgramme aimed to allow this cohort to participate in different art forms with peers from similar backgrounds in a shared, 'safe' space.

It provided an opportunity for these young people to engage in activities that fostered positive friendships and increased confidence but also encouraged them to try new activities and develop new skills. Each week young people were guided through various activities with artists and youth engagement facilitators delivering co-designed, interactive, creative, and fun group work sessions. In this environment, the children and young people experienced a variety of art forms including traditional arts and crafts, animation, music production, photography, and virtual reality (VR). Many sessions used leading edge technology, thereby introducing children to electronic equipment and software they otherwise may not have been able to access.







To help deliver the iProgramme, the project trained and upskilled young volunteers as iPEER mentors.<sup>5</sup> Their role was not only in the continuation of activities following the project, but also to act as a pivotal mechanism for gathering the true and unrestricted opinions from their peers involved in the project.<sup>6</sup>

The programme aimed to help produce a series of positive outcomes, or 'differences', in the lives of the participants. These were:

- **INCREASED CONFIDENCE. THIS AIMED AT IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM, WELLBEING AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITIES.**
- **INCREASED INSTANCES OF TRYING NEW THINGS. THIS SOUGHT TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO EXPERIMENT DOING NEW ACTIVITIES, EXPERIENCES, OR VENTURES OUTSIDE THEIR COMFORT ZONE.**
- **IMPROVED BEHAVIOUR. THIS MEASURE SOUGHT TO LOOK AT REDUCING INCIDENTS OF ANTISOCIAL, DISRUPTIVE, OR OTHER BEHAVIOURS THAT COULD LEAD TO NEGATIVE OUTCOMES FOR THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON AND THE WIDER SOCIETY.**
- **OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOMES. THIS AREA LOOKED AT TANGIBLE BENEFITS THAT HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON A PARTICIPANT'S LIFE SUCH AS IMPROVED ACADEMIC WORK AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, OR BETTER SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT.<sup>7</sup>**

Over the three years, the iProgramme engaged 188 children and younger people across Northern Ireland. The activity in the programme varied over the three years. For example, during the first year (April 2020 to March 2021) many of the sessions were delivered online due to COVID restrictions. For instance, sessions between August 2020 to March 2021 were given online on a Monday and Thursday night for two hours to five groups. Once COVID regulations were relaxed, sessions were delivered face to face. In the first year, there were 51 participants in the project.<sup>8</sup>

During the second year (April 2021 to March 2022), the iProgramme successfully engaged with 52 young people across the Belfast area. Two organisations that support looked after and trauma experienced young people, Foster Care Associates (FCA) and Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC), joined WWA to take part in the programme. The programme delivered 46 sessions to 52 children and young people and covered art forms that included visual/traditional art, music production and DJing, animation, and VR and augmented reality (AR).<sup>9</sup>





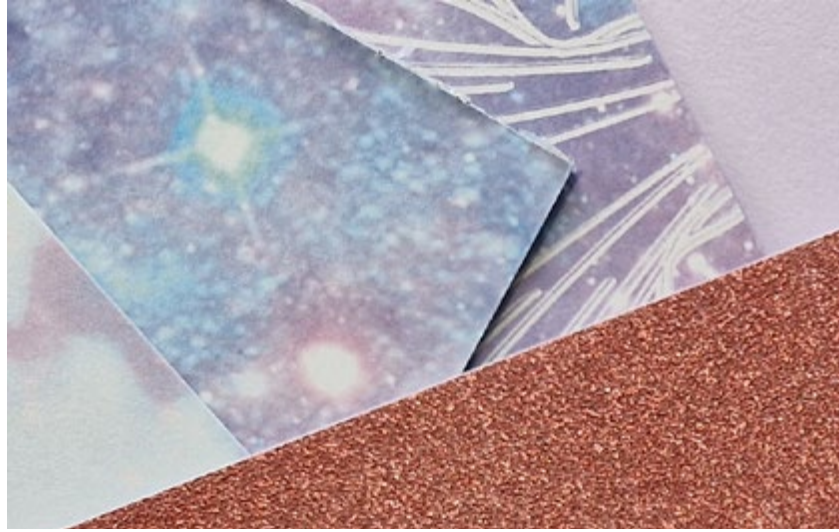
In the third year of the project (April 2022 to March 2023), the iProgramme successfully delivered 67 sessions to 85 individuals in seven youth groups all of which produced unique and bespoke creative outcomes based on their needs and interests. For example, one group exhibited their artwork in two locations over a four-month period.<sup>10</sup> The iProgramme was run at a variety of locations with several partners across Belfast during this time, including:

- **FCA AND VOYPIC. THEY RAN FIVE SESSIONS FROM APRIL 2022 TO NOVEMBER 2022 THAT COVERED ONE ART SESSION, ONE ACTIVITY SESSION, ONE SHOWCASE EVENT, AND TWO EXHIBITION SESSIONS.**
- **NEW START EDUCATION CENTRE: ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.**
- **PATHWAYS PROJECT AT THE NELSON STREET CENTRE. THEY RAN 11 SESSIONS FROM APRIL 2022 TO JUNE 2022 THAT INCLUDED TEN ART SESSIONS AND A FINAL CELEBRATION SESSION. THE PATHWAYS PROJECT ALSO RAN 11 SESSIONS AT THE SHANKILL ROAD CENTRE BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2022 TO JANUARY 2023 THAT CONSISTED OF TEN ART SESSIONS AND ONE CELEBRATION SESSION.**<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the programme, WWA worked with eight voluntary sector partners:

1. **ARCHWAYS**
2. **FCA**
3. **VOYPIC**
4. **NEW START EDUCATION CENTRE**
5. **PATHWAYS EAST**
6. **PATHWAYS SHANKILL**
7. **PATHWAYS CITY CENTRE**
8. **INCLUDE YOUTH**

# 01 TARGET GROUPS



The original grant application submitted by WWA aimed to work with 85 individuals, 40 aged 10 to 15 and 45 aged 16 to 18. These would be children and younger people who were 'looked after' and/or were affected by trauma, and 'disadvantaged'.<sup>12</sup>

CIN defined 'disadvantaged' as a person experiencing disadvantage as a result of illness, distress, abuse or neglect, any kind of disability, behavioural or psychological difficulties, and living in poverty or situations of deprivation.<sup>13</sup>


The Northern Ireland government states that a looked-after child is one who is 'provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours by the authority in the exercise of its social services function. Children are taken into care for a variety of reasons, the

most common being to protect a child from abuse or neglect. In other cases, their parents could be absent or may be unable to cope due to disability or illness.'<sup>14</sup>

As has been pointed out above, the iProgramme engaged with 188 individuals over the course of the project, this was more than double the original target number of 85. The demographic breakdown of the children and young people who participated in the programme is set out below.

**Table 1: Demographic breakdown of iProgramme participants over the three years of the project.**

<b>YEAR OF PROGRAMME/AGE GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>AGED 10-15</b>	<b>AGED 16-18</b>	<b>AGED 19 &amp; OVER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
2020/2021 <sup>15</sup>	36	15	0	51
2021/2022 <sup>16</sup>	38	12	2	52
2022/2023 <sup>17</sup>	49	34	0	85



All these participants were identified as (1) being looked-after children who may have experienced trauma, and (2) come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Typically, those participating in the programme:

- **LIVED IN/CAME FROM AREAS OF HIGH DEPRIVATION, INTERFACE VIOLENCE, AND POVERTY, OR WERE CONSIDERED VULNERABLE AND AT RISK, WITH A LARGE PROPORTION EXPERIENCING TRAUMA AND/OR HAVE EXPERIENCE OF THE CARE SYSTEM, ARE LOOKED-AFTER, OR HAVE A NEWCOMER BACKGROUND.**
- **FACED MANY COMPLEX ISSUES INCLUDING FAMILY BREAKDOWN, BEREAVEMENT, ABUSE, NEGLECT, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ISOLATION, ATTACHMENT AND BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES, SCHOOL EXCLUSION, LOW ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT, LOW CONFIDENCE, POOR MENTAL HEALTH, WERE FLEEING FROM WAR OR SETTLING IN A NEW PLACE. AN ARTIST IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PROJECT COMMENTED THAT, “THESE YOUNG GIRLS ALL HAVE FAMILY PROBLEMS, AND THEY COME FROM DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ART IS NOT APPRECIATED AND SUPPORTED.”<sup>18</sup>**
- **HABITUATED IN RESIDENTIAL, INDEPENDENT FACILITIES, FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARE, DETACHED FROM BIRTH FAMILIES, LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATIONS, AND EXPERIENCE ACUTE DISRUPTION IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES WITH DIRECT INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT FROM SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER SPECIALIST PROVIDERS.**

As a consequence of their backgrounds, one care worker commented: "Children who obviously have experienced high levels of abuse are hypervigilant all the time. So, safety and security is key for them. And so, whenever you are doing any type of work, from my perspective, the relationship with the child is key...because...adults haven't...been safe, haven't been reliable, and actually probably a lot of the time have caused them harm...in one way or another. Building a relationship with the children is key, especially one that is consistent...and any sort of slight change... can be very difficult for the children. Things that are as simple as the time of something changing or a new person coming into the group...can have quite a big impact on a child

because automatically it will put them back into fight or flight mode. The children, then, will be obviously unsettled, and they can't focus on other things.'<sup>19</sup>

Because of their background, many of these children and younger people can remain isolated and withdrawn in school and community youth settings, and such environments may present them with an overwhelming sense of fear that others may discover they are in care.<sup>20</sup>

In summary, the iProgramme was delivered to twice the intended number of participants, all of whom were looked-after children and from disadvantaged backgrounds.



*"As has been pointed out above, the iProgramme engaged with 188 individuals over the course of the project, this was more than double the original target number of 85."*

# 02 OUTCOMES



As pointed out above, the iProgramme sought to make a positive impact in four areas of the participants lives:

- a) **INCREASED CONFIDENCE**
- b) **INCREASED INSTANCES OF TRYING NEW THINGS**
- c) **IMPROVED BEHAVIOUR**
- d) **OTHER POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

The section below explores how, over its three years of operation, iProgramme made a difference in each of these areas.



## a) INCREASED CONFIDENCE

Confidence is an important 'soft skill' for children to adopt, and can have a major impact on their life chances in the future. It can aid their communication, positively shape the perception of other people, give them self-belief, and help them with more effective decision making.

Improvements in confidence were defined as a beneficial increase in participants' feelings of self-worth and confidence.<sup>21</sup> Improvements in confidence were also noted by staff, with many children at the end of iProgramme projects expressing themselves openly, showing self-confidence, engaging positively, communicating their own interest and needs, encouraging each other, and discussing ideas and interests.<sup>22</sup>

One young person from the first year of the project said: "Sometimes I can't express what's inside, but this [the iProgramme project] has helped, and then when asked about my work, I find it easier to put it in words. I'm not as shy, it seems easier if I can see it first, but I talk about how I feel."<sup>23</sup>

A person aged 15 in the second year of iProgramme remarked: "I really enjoy this programme because I get to see other teenagers who are the same as me; that doesn't happen a lot. It has helped me feel more confident; I've made new friends who I can see each week."<sup>24</sup>

A foster parent, also from the second year of the programme, recollected: "The programme has really improved their [the children and young people] self-esteem; over the weeks they have become more confident and take pride in what they are doing."<sup>25</sup>

It was observed from an iProgramme project run by New Start Education in 2022/2023 that children and young people were able to create and sign graffiti murals that were displayed as a permanent feature in their community centre. This artwork generated great pride amongst the participants. They said they felt pride when the new iProgramme students saw the murals as they would know who made them.<sup>26</sup>

One young person aged 16 commented that: "My fave activity was high exposure light photography. I enjoyed this the most because you felt more involved. I think in the future, this new skill will help me talk to new people."<sup>27</sup>

One staff member observed that: "Apart from the obvious enjoyment of the programme, there was a definite commitment to all aspects of the young people's projects. There is an apparent rise in confidence and self-esteem and pride in their work. They have taken great pride in their artwork and openly talked about the new skills they have gained."<sup>28</sup>

A care worker commented that: "Foster parents gave us feedback that they had received from schools...that...their confidence [had improved] ...in simple things like reading aloud or answering questions in class...[They had seen]...significant differences...since they joined the programme...it definitely was something that enhanced their ability and their confidence."<sup>29</sup>

The table below shows that the activities undertaken by the iProgramme had a 'significant' impact on improving the levels of confidence among participants. This was consistently demonstrated throughout the three years of the project.

**Table 2: Progress made with regard to increased confidence**

YEAR	PARTICIPANT NUMBER	HAVE EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	HAVE STARTED TO EXPERIENCE PROGRESS?	ARE YET TO EXPERIENCE PROGRESS?
2020/2021 <sup>30</sup>	51	60.8%	35.3%	3.9%
2021/2022 <sup>31</sup>	52	59.6%	25.0%	15.4%
2022/2023 <sup>32</sup>	85	60.0%	29.4%	8.2%
Average	N/A	60.1%	29.9%	9.2%

## b) INCREASED INSTANCES OF ‘TRYING NEW THINGS’

Having the self-assurance to try new things is important for self-development when growing up. It allows individuals to experiment with new experiences, take advantage of opportunities, and is an example of being confident. Being able to try new things is an important soft skill that helps children overcome the fear of failure, escape negative peer pressure, and make themselves less vulnerable to exploitation.

The iProgramme gave participants opportunities to try and experiment with different types of art. The aim was to give young people more opportunities to engage in art and creative activities, and to build resilience within the young people. Trying new things can be undoubtedly daunting. The unfamiliar can make people nervous in a way that is hard to describe. The act of leaving a person’s comfort zone puts people in a vulnerable position, and may leave individuals with an onslaught of questions running through their heads. All too often, looked-after children and traumatised young people have limited or no resilience, which can create a fear of the unknown and stop them from participating.<sup>33</sup>

One young person aged 16 who participated in the iProgramme in 2021/2022 said: “I really didn’t like doing art in school, but really enjoy Tuesday nights as I have got to meet other

young people, and it’s really good. It also made me see that art is not just drawing, and I like all the things we do there.”<sup>34</sup>

Another young person, aged 15, commented: “I love that I have got to try new things that I haven’t had a chance to do before.”<sup>35</sup>

A 16-year-old young person involved in the third year of the iProgramme said: “The new skill I have learnt is trying different things. This will help me because I will give things a go.”<sup>36</sup>

A staff member in the same year observed that: “They [the children and young people] have learned new skill,s which has increased their confidence. I have seen the young people more willing to step out of their comfort zones and want to try new things. They have shown a pride in their work and have been keen to show it to staff. It has been a great session, and an opportunity for us to see what the young people have done.”<sup>37</sup>

The table below shows that the activities undertaken by the iProgramme had a ‘significant’ impact on improving the willingness of participants to ‘try new things’. Though the levels of ‘trying new things’ varied throughout the three years, it was consistently high, with a large majority stating they had made ‘significant progress’.

**Table 3: Progress made with regard to ‘trying new things’**

YEAR	PARTICIPANT NUMBER	HAVE EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	HAVE STARTED TO EXPERIENCE PROGRESS?	ARE YET TO EXPERIENCE PROGRESS?
2020/2021 <sup>38</sup>	51	82.4%	17.6%	3.9%
2021/202 <sup>39</sup>	52	63.5%	21.2%	15.4%
2022/2023 <sup>40</sup>	85	71.8%	17.6%	8.2%
Average		72.5%	18.8%	9.2%

### c) IMPROVED BEHAVIOUR

Poor or ‘bad’ behaviour can have negative impacts for the individual and society. Examples of poor behaviour on the iProgramme were instances of disruption, outbursts, aggressive behaviour, or lateness to sessions.

The iProgramme aimed to improve behaviour in the participants by using arts to stimulate imagination and creativity to help young people discover who they are and how to engage with their feelings and other people in a positive manner. Visual art and drama participation also assisted to bring a sense of calm to the body, positively impact mindset, help with the interpretation of surroundings, and improve their emotional state. Putting their feelings into an art, poem, song, or drama gives the child or younger person a ‘safe’ outlet for negative emotions through an enjoyable activity, which accelerates the wellbeing and growth process. But expressive arts are not just for coping; they also have great effects on life skills development. Being angry or hurt is not always easy to describe in words, but a young person can put these emotions into a drawing, poem or dance and make it easy for themselves and others to comprehend. It also creates a starting point for conversation, which can lead to a more open expression of feelings and thoughts, and, in turn, assist in improving

behaviour.<sup>41</sup>

In the first year of the iProgramme, youth worker and facilitator responses showed that the young people improved their behaviour in many areas. For example, over the duration of the course, there was a 50 per cent reduction in negative attitude and behaviour incidents, such as examples of outbursts, lateness, or aggression.<sup>42</sup>

A staff member in the third year of the programme observed that the iProgramme: “Helped with their [participant’s] social skills, getting them to participate in activities with other young people. They loved the fact that they had an input to what they did, and their opinions were taken into consideration.”<sup>43</sup>

An example of how younger people may change was Child Z. This young person, who had previously been abrupt, loud, critical of peers, and dismissive in the early stages of the programme, responded positively to another young person singing in front of the group. Remaining composed and not making any derogatory comments, they found themselves beginning to laugh, but made eye contact with staff indicating they were stepping out. On discussion, they apologised for leaving, stating that they tried to manage their emotions as they did

not want to embarrass anyone or interrupt the session. Staff praised Child Z, and highlighted that by recognising their own behaviour, being self-aware, and taking responsibility, they were able to take the other person's and

the group's feelings into consideration by discreetly removing themselves with minimal disruption.<sup>44</sup>

**Case study:** Child K. At the beginning of an iProgramme project, participants were presented with the opportunity to express their feelings through physical art, in any way they wanted, to create a design or picture. One artist took a slightly more directive approach for the second meeting by introducing a large sheet of paper with a design that the young people could come and fill in at any time during the programme. For this design, conversation amongst the young people present continued to work out a final piece of work which would be a mural that expressed their feelings and outlook on the world around them. The back-and-forth movement of group art-making created a busy and dynamic space in which to work. Child K found this to be a particularly satisfying experience, reflective of the way she carries out her work. She said: "I felt it gave me a lot of space to...be colourful, to be myself...but also appreciate each other's talents. I think it's not taken on, so I really felt much of mine was in that picture. And I didn't feel judged, I felt I had the freedom to do it." Child K in other groups had struggled to make connection with others and didn't feel confident to give an input. At home, she took a lot of responsibility for the care of her younger sister but, as her youth worker stated, her "strength and maturity" at home never seem to translate into the youth club or youth club activities. Child K would often not attend, or attend late to the club, still dressed in her school uniform. It became particularly striking how art and the sense of liberation seemed to support a "journey of discovery" for Child K. Child K only missed one session, and was only late twice, which was a significant improvement. Child K stated that: "I wouldn't really be expressing very much about myself before, but now I feel I am opening up and sharing my ideas with others. It was easier, as many of the young people had similar experiences as me. I still find it strange though." Child K explained that, within the art-making process, she stood on an equal level with others, whereas in other activities, she felt 'alone' and not able to take part. This feeling was also acknowledged by staff. The iProgramme and sessions served as a way of breaking down barriers and opening possibilities for open communication with Child K and understand what she was going through. Child K moved from being very distant, distracted, and closed to being a regular attendee, expressing her feelings and gaining confidence in speaking out at the youth centre. This case study highlights that art-making can provide meaningful opportunities for fostering healthy relationships within an interactive and engaging process. It has allowed Child K to gain confidence to try new things and have a change in her behaviour. Although Child K had shown "bad behaviour" before, she was now beginning to be a more positive member within the youth club and interacting more with other people.<sup>45</sup>

The table below shows that the activities undertaken by the iProgramme had a 'significant' impact on improving the behaviour of participants.

**Table 4: Progress made with regard to 'improved behaviour'**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PARTICIPANT NUMBER</b>	<b>HAVE EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS</b>	<b>HAVE STARTED TO EXPERIENCE PROGRESS?</b>	<b>ARE YET TO EXPERIENCE PROGRESS?</b>
2020/2021 <sup>46</sup>	51	17.6%	64.7%	17.6%
2021/2022 <sup>47</sup>	52	67.3%	17.3%	15.4%
2022/2023 <sup>48</sup>	85	77.6%	11.8%	8.2%
Average	N/A	54.2%	31.3%	13.8%



## d) OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOMES

This section lists other positive outcomes among children and young people taking part in the iProgramme reported by WWA staff and partners during the three years of the project:

**Reduction in the number of children deemed to be 'at risk'.** When the iProgramme ran in its first year, 14 participants had been judged as 'at risk' by their care or youth worker. By the end of the programme, this number had dropped to nine young people.<sup>49</sup>

**Improvement in mental health.** There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that the mental health of some participants had improved through engagement in the iProgramme. During the 2020–2021 iProgramme, one child was reported to have a 'notable drop in depression symptoms'.<sup>50</sup>

**Promoting leadership skills amongst younger people.** Staff during Year 2 of the project gave participants an opportunity to lead and direct activities such as group discussions and games. In one example, a young person during a group game was actively encouraging others and giving instructions. Staff recognised this and handed the game over to the young person concerned. This individual excelled in being the leader, and raised the energy of the game, and made it more fun and competitive for their peers.<sup>51</sup>

**Promoting aspiration and career possibilities.** In the third year of the iProgramme, staff noticed ongoing conversations and interest by participants in the option of 'making money from being creative', and what the creative sector offered as a career. Young people and children asked how to make a career through self-employment, and young people were interested in artists' ability to work freelance.

One staff member commented: "It was a great way to get the young people interacting. It has increased the young people's confidence, and they have come out of their shells. They also got to use equipment that they may not normally have access to, and this was really enjoyable; they got to experience lots of creative things. They have also taken a real interest and opened their minds to employment ideas also."<sup>52</sup>



# 03 EFFICACY

The purpose of this section is to explore how the programme delivered the outcomes listed above; in other words, what made the programme successful. Several factors were reported by staff, project coordinators and peer mentors.

**The cumulative effect of participation.** The fact that the iProgramme was delivered over an extended time period of several weeks helped increase contact, engagement, and confidence among the participating young people.<sup>53</sup>

In the third year of the iProgramme, a series of surveys were undertaken at various points of the course to assess the confidence and willingness of participants to 'try new things'. At the beginning, when asked 'I am willing to try new things', only 58% of the young people said they were. At the mid-point, that had risen to 75%. By the end, 85% said they felt able to try new things.<sup>54</sup>

**The social dimension.** One key mechanism that drew younger people to attend was the engagement and interaction with other people of their age and similar background.

As one younger person aged 15 said: 'I really enjoy this programme because I get to see other teenagers who are the same as me. That doesn't happen a lot; it has helped me feel more confident. I've made new friends who I can see each week.'<sup>55</sup> A 16-year-old participant said: "I...really enjoy Tuesday nights as I have got to meet other young people and it's really good."<sup>56</sup>

**Tailoring activities to needs and interests.** Staff and peer mentors reported that each group was different and, not unsurprisingly, required a different approach, activities, and content. Given that iProgramme had access to a wide range of different skills and expertise across varied art forms (for example, traditional art, like painting, or digital arts, such as animation) meant activities could be matched to interests.<sup>57</sup> As one young person aged 16 said: "I'm not really interested in art, but I have loved the digital stuff."<sup>58</sup>



**All the participants had very similar backgrounds.** Children and younger people who attended iProgramme reported that a factor in their ability to build friendships, to socialise, and feel 'safe' was that all participants were 'the same as me'.<sup>59</sup>

**The art-based activities taught participants new and valued skills.** One younger person aged 18 said: "My favourite art activity was photography. I enjoyed this the most because the photographer helped us learn about different types of cameras. I have never used a camera before. In the future, this new skill will help me take pictures of my friends."<sup>60</sup> One 14-year-old recalled: "The new thing I have learnt is how to create something with my friends. This new skill showed me how to work as a team."<sup>61</sup>

**The activities interested and engaged the participants.** Many children and younger people would not have attended on a regular basis if they did not enjoy the activities. As one younger person said: "I really didn't like doing art in school, but really enjoy Tuesday nights, it...made me see that art is not just drawing and I like all the things we do there."<sup>62</sup>

Many of the activities are new to the participants; one young person said: "I love that I have got to try new things that I haven't had a chance to do before."<sup>63</sup>

A staff member commented: "The young people have enjoyed this as they don't normally have access to this resource."<sup>64</sup>

One foster parent had commented that one child they care for said, when told that they were going to do art, 'I absolutely hate art... I don't want to go there. I'm not doing that.' However, the foster parent had encouraged the child to attend and was 'shocked' by how much they enjoyed the activities.<sup>65</sup>

A care worker commented that art was important for ensuring the engagement and participation of some children: "But we had a couple of children attend that...would never have engaged with anything we've done before. And I mean, we run Christmas events, Easter events, summer games, Halloween games, but it was the fact that it was art, I think, drew demand."<sup>66</sup>

By offering interest-led activities, increased participation in the group (such as group discussions, team projects, and volunteering) sequentially created greater self-awareness and social skills amongst the participants, and helped them to build stronger relationships with others.

**Undertaking creative and art-based activities was a catalyst for discussion, expression, and personal development.** Support staff found that when young people worked with them on arts activities it allowed a space for children who struggle with one-to-one discussions to enter a dialogue with them. These conversations often happened 'organically' without prompting. Their staff

felt the activities were so relaxing, and young people felt so at ease that they were comfortable to share their thoughts and feelings about difficult issues they were facing. Staff stated that the impact of this was on par with the car journey home when the most disclosures are made. This level of interaction is a powerful indication of the impact art can have for the most vulnerable needing support.<sup>67</sup>

One staff member commented on the engagement of one young person during the second year of the iProgramme. They said that the individual: "always destroys any work they made in class; no matter how much work they had completed, they would get frustrated and rip it up. After completing their art session, they kept their art work. They showed it to the staff, they didn't destroy it, and that is a massive step for them."<sup>68</sup>

Another staff member noted: "Many of our children and young people struggle significantly with concentrating and learning within the school setting. The [iProgramme] project gave the young people the opportunity to express themselves and learn about different forms of art in a safe setting with adults who understand the challenges they are trying to overcome. The Wheelworks staff were encouraging, and connected with the young people, giving them the time and space to develop their creativity. One young person was able to voice the positive impact one of the artists had on his confidence when he said that she was very gentle, listened to what he was saying, and she encouraged him."<sup>69</sup>

**iProgramme activities offered an alternative to those children who did not 'do sport'.** One volunteer commented that: "Most of the activities the young people get involved in are outdoor sporting things, and I think the opportunity of getting to learn more about art is really important to them. It is therapeutic and gives them a creative outlet to work through some of the challenges they face."<sup>70</sup>

**The iProgramme offered emotional support and space to those who wanted it.** Creative-led activities offered by trained artists, youth engagement officers, and support members gave emotional support to the young person, providing validation, empathy, and active listening. This encouraged them to talk about their feelings and experiences without fear of judgement or failure.

A staff member in the second year of the programme stated that "Looked after young people can remain isolated and withdrawn in school and community youth settings, which has a detrimental impact on their mental and emotional wellbeing, their ability to positively engage and form relationships, along with an overwhelming sense of fear that others may discover they are in care. Attending the iProgramme provides a creative outlet to things they are experiencing, breaks down multiple barriers and provides them with a

safe space to be open about their own lived experiences, taking away that additional layer of stress where they get a break from home life, help them focus, be themselves, and have fun.”<sup>71</sup>

**The iProgramme offered opportunities for participants to showcase their creative work.** For example, art shows and celebration events helped them to feel proud of their accomplishments and contribute to a belief in themselves and their abilities.

The young people participating on a New Start Education project were able to create and sign their own graffiti murals, which was then displayed as a permanent feature in their centre. This created great pride, as the participants felt that when new students see the artwork, they would know who made it.<sup>72</sup>

Another group exhibited their creative work in St Anne’s Cathedral in central Belfast over the summer period in 2022. It was reported that this increased their aspirations, and generated a new form of pride in their work, as many children who are looked-after and/or have experienced trauma struggled with self-confidence.<sup>73</sup>

One staff member involved in the third year of the project commented: “I feel that this programme has had a positive impact on the young people. It got them to communicate with each other, work in a group and individually, At the start, saying they couldn’t do it, and now they have completed the workshops. The end product is amazing.”<sup>74</sup>



**Case Study.** Child F was aged 16 and had recently come into the care of social services prior to the commencement of the iProgramme in 2021/2022. Initially coming to the workshops, they were quiet and isolated, choosing to work on their own, and not mixing with others. They displayed low self-esteem, refusing to finish artwork because they felt it wasn't perfect, and hiding it from staff. When staff did give praise, they immediately stopped working and said 'no, it's rubbish'. Support staff informed us that Child F struggled with their mental health (anxiety), and often alienated themselves from peers and adults. According to staff outside of the group, Child F would have displayed bullying type behaviours, often insulting and confronting other children. Child F did not participate in any school or extracurricular activities and teaching staff found it challenging to support them in the classroom, as they displayed defensive behaviour and often refused to engage, even on a one-to-one level. Support staff stated Child F's passion for art was expressed after joining the programme. With encouragement, Child F started to chat to others, and informed support staff that it was the first place they felt accepted and appreciated, mixing with others who understood the challenges they faced growing up. Combined with this, they seemed to be able to accept constructive feedback and not see this as negative. Over the course of iProgramme, Child F was more open with support staff, and shared that they no longer felt so alone, opening up about what was going on at home. These creative activities allowed time for them to be themselves, relax, and get a break from issues they were experiencing, and assisted them in sharing more honest conversations week after week. This supported Child F to cope on a more practical and emotional level. Feedback from home was that Child F began displaying a more positive attitude towards other people, and was engaging better with the family. Their school reported a more proactive approach to schoolwork, and an improvement in relationships with teaching staff. Throughout the programme, Child F progressed further, their confidence grew significantly, particularly in maintaining friendships, taking pride in their work, and expressing how much they looked forward to coming to the sessions. Child F said, they were able to recognise and find something they had a real interest in, and wanted to develop this into a career. This led to them applying to art courses at college. This is the positive difference the iProgramme was able to make, and highlights that implementing holistic solutions through diversionary and creative engagement fosters positive impact in the lives of many young people.<sup>75</sup>

*Having the  
self-assurance  
to try new  
things is  
important for  
self-development  
when growing up.*

# 04 LESSONS

As part of the regular reporting mechanism, staff on the iProgramme were asked for their reflections on major 'lessons' regarding the project and its implementation. They suggested several learnings:

**The use, utility and limitations of digital technology.** COVID restrictions during the early part of the project, especially in 2020-2022, limited the physical meeting of participants on the iProgramme. The programme moved to a digital format as an alternative, but this approach, though useful, had limited impact due to digital poverty (i.e. some houses did not have access to computer equipment), loneliness, family environment, and difficulty in maintaining wellbeing support during virtual sessions. The virtual sessions were useful in maintaining contact and keeping people engaged, but the face-to-face groups were much more effective in supporting younger people's emotional wellbeing, skills development, and participation.<sup>76</sup>

**The value of peer mentors.** They were 'very beneficial' in helping to create positive role models, supporting and delivering activities, 'buddying up' with young people, taking the lead in small group discussions, and encouraging other young people to enjoy and partake in the collective tasks. The input of the peer mentors, in turn, helped younger people gain 'confidence and positive life skills'.<sup>77</sup>

**The importance in having consistency in running the course.** One care worker pointed out that "the consistency of the same place every week at the same time with the same staff [was important; the only person who changed was the artist who took sessions, as the younger people did a range of different types of art]...Wheelworks were very good at bringing them [the artists] in to meet the children. And so they [the younger people] knew that, you know, there was a break, and then when they came back there would be one new person. But the support staff were the same every week. And so I think that was really important that the children had someone there that they knew; because, obviously, their lives are quite chaotic, I suppose is the best way to put it. So they may have been struggling one week and not the next. If there was a familiar person there all the time that was consistent, that seemed to work really well."<sup>78</sup>

**The challenge in getting appropriately qualified staff.** Sourcing artists with expertise in at-risk and looked-after young people was challenging and required significant work.<sup>79</sup> The development of specific training may be worth considering in future.

**The value of specialist creative expertise and arts equipment.** This offered young people an excellent opportunity to gain knowledge and digital skills that they would not gain through their mainstream educational experiences. Feedback from the organisations was that they would like varied artforms and longer programmes to enhance young people's creative and social skills.<sup>80</sup>

**The importance in having an exhibition or show celebration at the end of the project.** One of the iProgramme sessions involved younger people exhibiting their art at St Anne's Cathedral in central Belfast. A care worker reflected: "We hadn't realised at the start, but the exhibition that was put on at the end, which then we worked together to get put on in the cathedral in Belfast, was such an empowering moment for our young people. And we went to the exhibition night, and they just were really proud of themselves, and proud to show what they had done to their foster families and to some of our staff and people that came...I think it just really inspired them and made them feel valued...And I think a lot of them struggle to achieve things in school, so this was something on the outside that they could be really proud of."<sup>81</sup>

**The importance of flexibility and co-creation in support, engagement and learning.** The iProgramme demonstrated the importance of taking a flexible and inclusive approach to designing and delivering courses, as the emotional state of participants could vary from week to week. As one staff member pointed out, the events in the home lives of the participants had the "biggest impact on engagement" when participants were in a session.<sup>82</sup> It was necessary to work with children in whatever emotional state they were in when they turned up, and staff had to be reactive, innovative, and responsive.

One iProgramme session took place in a café and a church. One care worker noted that, "Some of the children obviously had issues with religion, so they... didn't really like go [to the church]... even though they weren't partaking in any religious activities. And obviously that is, for some of them, personal experience...So we spoke to Wheelworks about that, and then just set the location in the café, which worked a lot better, and the children seemed to really like it there."<sup>83</sup>

Versatility in session design was necessary, as the only thing that kept children engaged in the sessions was their interest in group activities, and these activities had to appeal to their interests. Consequently, it was also important to consult the young people present about what interested them, as there was no compulsion to attend. The wide range of artforms and media available through WWA's network of artists and facilitators meant that diverse interests

could be met, and young people could be successfully engaged.<sup>84</sup> As one young person commented, they did not like the traditional art but “loved the digital stuff.”<sup>85</sup>

The final area where adaptability was important was managing the impact of the COVID restrictions which limited physical meetings. The requirement to put iProgramme sessions online raised a host of issues such as digital poverty (i.e. lack of access to computers or equipment), loneliness, and difficulty in maintaining wellbeing support during virtual sessions. The online meetings were used as a ‘holding patterning until in person work could continue’.<sup>86</sup> In the second year of the iProgramme (2021–2022) the use of online sessions was often ‘at times difficult to navigate’, but the perseverance of staff, young people, organisations, and facilitators allowed for implementing necessary changes, with everyone adapting to and understanding the limitations that were faced. It was noted that ‘the success of the programme was evident, as numbers of young people attending were growing steadily; monitoring the participatory aspects was essential to allow facilitators/staff and organisations to work collaboratively and find solutions. For the young people, any change can be an anxious and difficult time; however, working in partnership, listening to their needs and interests, and then providing activities, helped to minimise the disruption.’<sup>87</sup>





SHARRE



# 05 CONCLUSIONS

The iProgramme project was efficacious, successful, and delivered effective outcomes throughout the three years of its duration.

The programme reached 188 children and younger people who are looked after and/or are affected by trauma, and were from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds. This was double the number of children that was identified in the original application.



Added to this, the project demonstrated major success in affecting positive change in the young people that attended. Over the three years of the project:

- a) **AN AVERAGE OF 60.1% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE EXPERIENCED 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS' IN DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE.**
- b) **AN AVERAGE OF 72.5% OF PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCED 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS' IN 'TRYING NEW THINGS'.**
- c) **AN AVERAGE OF 54.5% OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED ON THE COURSES MADE 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS' IN 'IMPROVED BEHAVIOUR'.**

These figures are impressive when it is considered that many of these children had come from areas of high deprivation, poverty, and interface violence, many faced complex issues of attachment and behaviour issues, school exclusion, and low academic attainment, and many were in residential care. Finally, the restrictions of the COVID pandemic also posed a major challenge in the face-to-face delivery of the programme, so the results achieved are impressive.

**The iProgramme shows that extracurricular learning with co-design methodology offers alternative ways to support children and younger people who are looked after and/or are affected by trauma to learn, participate and engage.** By taking a flexible, adaptive, and tailored learning approach, the iProgramme was successfully able to deliver person-centric sessions to a cohort of younger people who are often hard to reach, do not often respond well in conventional learning environments, and frequently lacked confidence in their abilities. The staff, facilitators and organisations also responded well to the organisational and learning challenges that the COVID restrictions presented, and enabled the sessions to be delivered successfully online until restrictions enabled in-person sessions to be resumed.

**The programme demonstrated that arts-based creative activities can be a highly effective medium in helping children develop 'soft skills', such as confidence and a willingness to try new things, but also helping them to engage, discuss, and explore their own challenges.**

The creative activities enabled people to explore, focus, and try out new activities and experiences, which for many were new and exciting. Support staff and i-Mentors found that where young people were engaged in creative activities, this could provide a catalyst for discussions, expression, and dialogue, which, outside such an environment, could prove challenging.

The experience of taking part in traditional painting or digital arts was also an important way of informing children about possible career paths open to them, and possibly inspiring them in the future.

Importantly, it was recognised that arts-based activities were an important alternative pursuit to other activities (such as sports) that

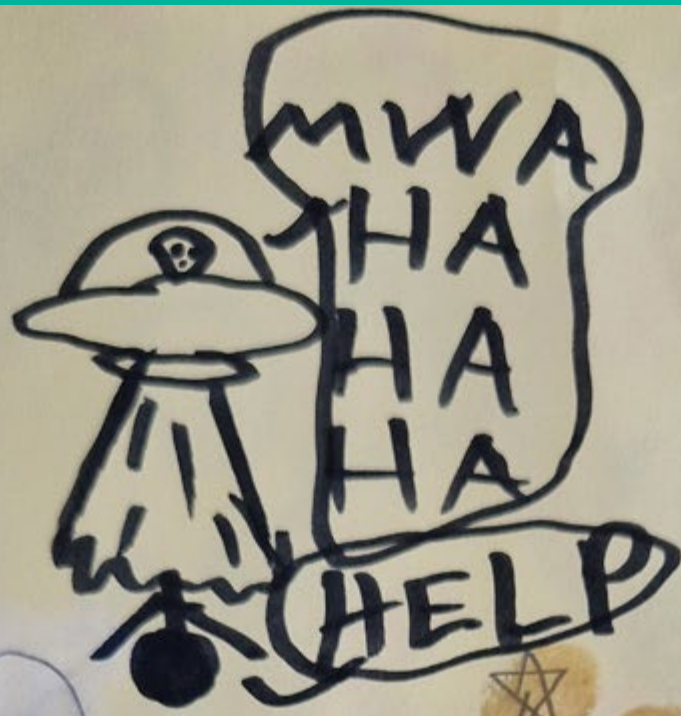
may not suit or interest all. It is recommended that further work is done to quantify how arts shaped the outcomes that were achieved in this project, and which activities were most effective (e.g. traditional art vs digital animation.)

**Further academic work is required to evaluate the long-term impact of initiatives like the iProgramme on participants' longer-term outcomes.** The results of the programme suggest that many children and young people benefited from participation, making them more confident and resilient. However, one staff member suggested that the iProgramme's impact on individual children and young people's lives depended on their home circumstances. They said that how children engaged each week depended on "what happens to them outside of the sessions; the children's home environment and their birth families have the biggest impact on engagement. This is not something we can change in a two-hour session."<sup>88</sup> While this observation is probably true for many participants, the evidence from the iProgramme suggested a range of other positive impacts that affected participants, such as the number deemed 'at risk', anecdotal improvements in mental health, and the promotion of aspiration and career possibilities. It is recommended that in future projects, a research dimension is added to capture the extent, nature, and longevity of such potential changes on the wider life of participants; in other words, how participation in the iProgramme shaped their life choices and perceptions in the longer term. Also, it would be intriguing to explore what impacts projects like the iProgramme had in terms of cost-effectiveness and social value.

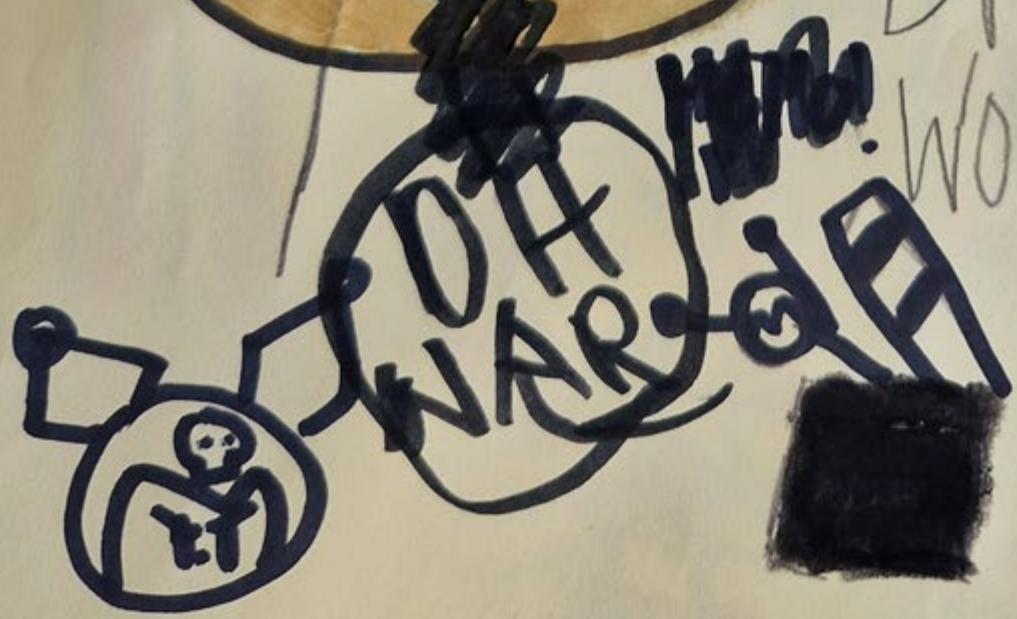
**Future programmes, like the iProgramme, have the potential to make a very positive difference to children whose prospects are frequently poorer than their peers.**

The number of 'looked-after children' in Northern Ireland is around 2,800.<sup>89</sup> It is long known that the educational outcomes of looked-after children are significantly poorer than those of other children. Around a quarter have had special education needs assessments, and this may, in part, explain why many obtain few qualifications at 16 compared to the general population.<sup>90</sup> For example, the most recent research found on the subject suggested that 27% of looked-after children achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C compared to 80% of the general school population.<sup>91</sup> Most of the differences in student progress at post-primary (78%) are thought to be attributable to student background and home learning environment. Most of the remainder of the variation relates to the impact of education.<sup>92</sup> Over the last ten years, the number of looked-after children has increased by 41%, with 79% in foster care.<sup>93</sup>

While the iProgramme, and projects like it, are not a social panacea to the wider problems that many looked-after children and/or trauma-affected children face, the evidence from this evaluation suggests such programmes can have a positive impact on many participants across all indicators. Further research is probably required into their effectiveness; the evidence presented here suggests that such interventions can have positive short-term impacts which may be life changing for some.



DREAM WORKS



# APPENDIX 1

# WHEELWORKS ARTS

WheelWorks Arts is a leading youth arts charity that, since 1995, has been working with young people aged 4 to 25 from communities across Northern Ireland.

The charity exists to support children and young people's social and cultural development through accessible and innovative community-based programmes, which provide a creative fusion of traditional and digital artforms, harnessing the arts for learning and change and giving young people a voice.

As a leading youth arts charity, WWA offers cutting-edge youth-led projects, in which participants express and explore their individuality through traditional and digital artforms, by mobilising the arts and bringing them into communities across Northern Ireland.<sup>94</sup>

In 2021–2022<sup>95</sup>, 11,111 young people aged 4 to 25 took part in the charity's activities – an increase of 30% from the COVID lockdown period – taking part in 390 workshops, which was an increase of 58% in workshops from the previous year.

WheelWorks Arts 2021–2022 accomplishments include:

- **390 IN PERSON WORKSHOPS**
- **16 FESTIVALS**
- **11 EXHIBITIONS**
- **23 VOLUNTEERS DEDICATING OVER 369 HOURS OF SERVICES**
- **44,644 PARTICIPANTS ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND ENGAGED WITH WHEELWORKS PROGRAMMES.**<sup>96</sup>

# APPENDIX 2 — METHODOLOGY FOR THE EVALUATION REPORT

This report was compiled from activity data collected by WWA iProgramme project co-ordinators during the three-year life of the project. The main data collection methods upon which this evaluation report is based were:

- Annual assessments. A series of reports were completed to report back to CIN and other funders on the progress of the programme.
- Surveys. A range of baseline, mid-point and end-point surveys were conducted during each of the three years of the project along with short self-assessment questionnaires completed by children and younger people attending the activity sessions and events. Additionally, Survey Monkey was used to consult WWA staff, artists and facilitators running iProgramme events, and volunteers, to help keep the delivery of content on track, and allow an opportunity for constructive comments to be made.
- Observational data and direct feedback. A range of anecdotal comments were taken from the younger people participating in the activities and workshops, and support staff working with those younger people, during the programme. This was used to help shape the development and delivery of future programmes to ensure it met the needs of participants.
- Regular reporting and recording of the comments of parents, staff, foster families, and other carers. To assess the positive or negative impact of the iProgramme on children participating in the programme, the views of carers, guardians and family members were sought and recorded.
- Attendance records. Monitoring attendance of those children and younger people involved in the programme was a crucial mechanism to monitor engagement and impact. This was also done at various times during the three-year life of the programme to comply with COVID regulations and guidance.
- Interviews. A number of follow-up interviews were held with staff, care, and youth workers who participated in the iProgramme.

The quotations cited in this report have been taken largely verbatim from the original reports so as not to alter the meaning and intention.

References are given to identify the source material of the quotes, and points to allow for further research and investigation.

# ENDNOTES

1 Table 1a: Children in Care for at least 12 months at 30 September 2021 by gender, age, religious background, ethnicity, type of placement and Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust, Children in Care in Northern Ireland, Department of Health (NI).

2 Table 5: Special Educational Needs Trend Data for Children of Compulsory School Age Continuously in Care for 12 months or longer (2011–2021), Northern Ireland, Department of Health (NI). See Caroline Perry, Looked after children—educational policy and practice, Paper 02/15, Northern Ireland Assembly, 8th December 2014, NIAR 725–14, p.1.

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4 iProgramme External Evaluation Brief, March 2023.

5 BBC Children in Need—Main Grants Full Application Form 35082 made by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, April 2020, p.10.

6 BBC Children in Need—Main Grants Full Application Form 35082 made by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, April 2020, p.11.

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8 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.2.

9 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.3.

10 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, pp.7–9.

11 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, pp.7–9.

12 BBC Children in Need—Main Grants Full Application Form 35082 made by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, April 2020, p.4.

13 <https://www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk/about-us/faqs/> Accessed 21.3.23.

14 <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/looked-after-children> Accessed 27.3.23.

15 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.2.

16 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.4.

17 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.4.

18 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.4.

19 Interview with a care worker for this

evaluation.

20 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.4.

22 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.4.

23 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.5.

24 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.4.

25 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.6.

26 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.6.

27 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.6.

28 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.7.

29 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.7.

30 Interview with a care worker for this evaluation.

31 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.3.

32 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.5.

33 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.5.

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35 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.9.

36 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.9.

37 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.11.

38 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.11.

39 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.5.

40 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.7.

41 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.8.

42 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.7.

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45 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, pp.9–10.

46 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.11.

47 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.6.

48 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.9.

49 Figures taken from Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.10.

50 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.7.

51 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.7.

52 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.11.

53 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.15.

54 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.5.

55 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.10.

56 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.6.

57 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.8.

58 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.18.

59 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.8.

60 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.5.

61 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.11.

62 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.13.

63 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.8.

64 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.8.

65 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.8.

66 Interview with a care worker for this evaluation.

67 Interview with a care worker for this evaluation.

68 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.11.

69 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.11.

70 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, pp.6–7.

71 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.9.

72 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for

the iProgramme, March 2022, p.4.

73 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.6.

74 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.15.

75 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.13.

76 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, pp.13–14.

77 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.10.

78 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, pp.17–18.

79 Interview with a care worker for this evaluation.

80 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.18.

81 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.18.

82 Interview with a care worker for this evaluation.

83 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.6.

84 Interview with a care worker for this evaluation.

85 Updated Difference Year 3 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2023, p.18.

86 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.8.

87 Updated Difference Year 1 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2021, p.10.

88 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.10.

89 Updated Difference Year 2 Grant Report Form submitted by Wheelworks Arts for the iProgramme, March 2022, p.6.

90 Table 1a: Children in Care for at least 12 months at 30 September 2021 by gender, age, religious background, ethnicity, type of placement and Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust, Children in Care in Northern Ireland, Department of Health (NI).

91 Table 5: Special Educational Needs Trend Data for Children of Compulsory School Age Continuously in Care for 12 months or longer (2011–2021), Northern Ireland, Department of Health (NI).

92 See Caroline Perry, Looked after children – educational policy and practice, Paper 02/15, Northern Ireland Assembly, 8th December 2014, NIAR 725–14, p.1.

93 J. Rasbash, G. Leckie, R. Pillinger, R. Jenkins, 'Children's educational progress: partitioning family, school and area effects' Journal of the Royal Statistical Society (2010), Vol. 173, No. 3, pp.657–682.

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97 Wheelworks Company Limited by Guarantee Financial Statements, 31 March 2022, p.5. [Charity Details | The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland \(charity-commissionni.org.uk\)](https://www.charity-commissionni.org.uk) Accessed 9.3.23.