



## Preston Healthier Together Yr One Report: June 2024

The 3 year Preston Healthier Together project aims to build stronger communities by bringing people together.

Our evaluations show that people are building self-esteem and confidence, are feeling more connected to, and interested in, other people, and are reporting feeling optimistic, less anxious and more able to cope with their conditions.

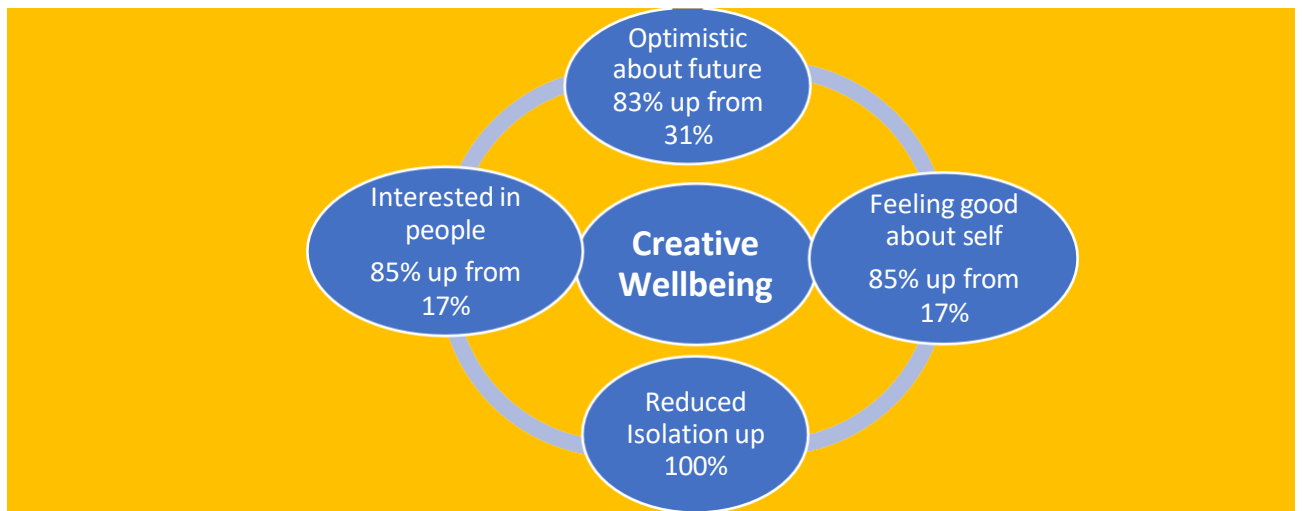
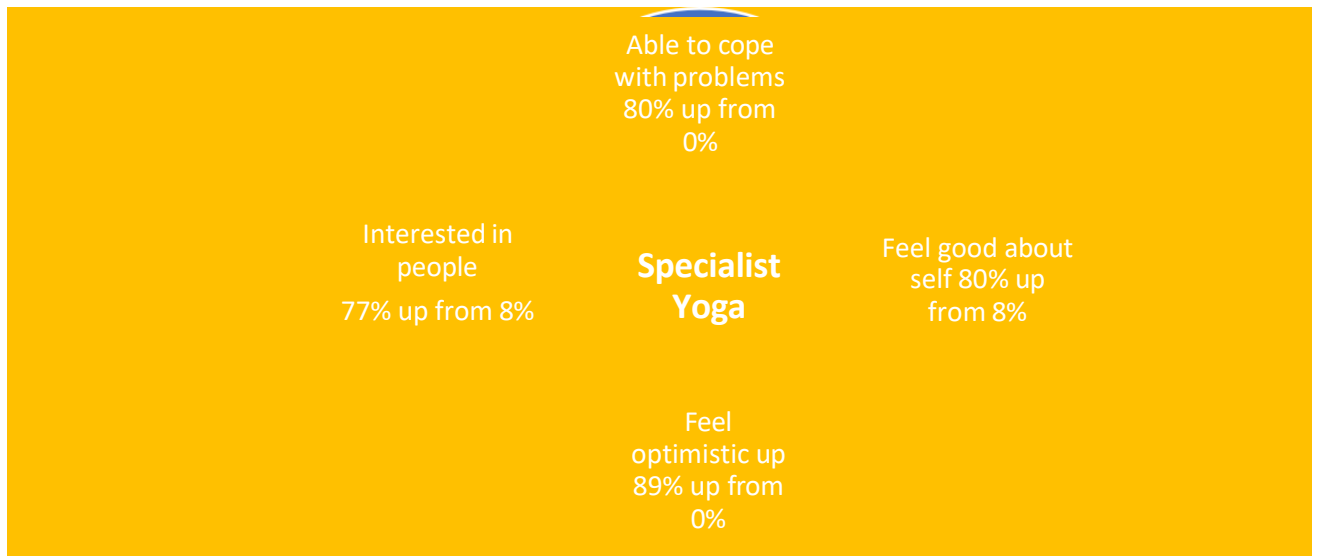
We are successfully reaching people experiencing chronic pain, mobility challenges, loneliness, chronic anxiety, and MS, women over 60, and Asian women as well as people who are neuro diverse and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Many participants have become engaged in the whole programme attending craft, dance and yoga as well as monthly Mandala Friends socials. They are making friends with each other and the programme has given them a social life and a sense of belonging.

We have exceeded our targets for session delivery and participant reach, except for monthly events which are down by 2 events due to the delay in recruitment of the Project Manager role.

	Sessions		Participants	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
<b>Existing creative wellbeing</b>	288	375	80	426
<b>Specialist Yoga</b>	96	105	30	50
<b>New Creative Wellbeing</b>	96	97	50	80
<b>Monthly Events</b>	10	8	50	58

## Highlight Outcome Summary



## Detailed Demographics

### **Collection Method**

We collect these via our online booking system which enables us to add customer tags which we can then pull reports from.

Using this enables us to monitor whether we are successful in reaching the demographics we set out to reach and we can then make changes with marketing and outreach activities.

### Existing creative wellbeing across the city

A mix of arts, dance, accessible yoga, drum and sound therapy.

Sessions	Participants	Chronic Pain	Mobility challenges	MS	Women over 60	Asian women	Loneliness
Target 288 Actual 376	Target 80 Actual 426	17	43	10	61	125	90%

#### Notes

*We are working with a diverse range of community members including those experiencing homelessness, Asian women, young people experiencing significant life challenges, older people with mobility challenges.*

*We have been successful in bringing diverse people together, for example Asian and white women and people with additional sensory needs attending dance and also joining the monthly Mandalas Friends socials and the creative wellbeing sessions at Mandala.*

### Specialist Yoga at Mandala

Accessible yoga incorporating hammocks and props for those for whom mainstream movement classes are not accessible due to additional sensory needs, trauma, chronic pain or mobility issues

Sessions	Total participants	Chronic Pain	Mobility challenges	MS	Women over 60	Asian women	Additional sensory needs	Trauma
Target 96 Actual 105	Target: 30 Actual: 53	38	9	3	20	23	12	11

#### Notes

We used the budget for the 2 missing Mandala Friends events to deliver an extra 9 sessions of Chair Yoga for Asian Muslim women.

100% of those attending the Specialist Yoga classes were experiencing chronic mental health challenges including PTSD, bi-polarism, depression and anxiety as these intersect with additional sensory needs, trauma and chronic pain.

The most common physical health challenges in addition to chronic pain were cancer, ME and long Covid.

### New Creative Wellbeing at Mandala

Accessible creative wellbeing activities for people experiencing loneliness, chronic pain, mobility issues, Asian women and women over 60

Sessions	Total participants	Chronic Pain	Mobility challenges	Women over 60	Asian women	Additional sensory needs	Loneliness
Target 96 Actual 97	Target 50 Actual 80	10	8	26	27	15	47

**Notes**

The overwhelming issue we find presented amongst those who attend weekly is that of loneliness and isolation and feedback has been that these sessions have resulted in improved confidence and reduced loneliness.

### Mandala Friends Programme

Key aim to reduce social isolation and form new friendships

Sessions	Participants	Chronic Pain	Mobility challenges	Women over 60	Asian women	Additional sensory needs	Loneliness
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<b>WEMWBS Wellbeing Measures</b>				
<b>All Programmes</b>				
<b>% agreeing that the programme improved the following...</b>				
	<b>Reduce isolation &amp; make friends</b>	<b>Improve fitness</b>	<b>Improve confidence</b>	<b>More able to cope</b>
<b>Specialist Yoga</b>	89% agree or strongly agree	89% agree or strongly agree	95% agree of strongly agree	95% agree of strongly agree
<b>New Creative Wellbeing</b>	100% agree or strongly agree	N/A	92% agree of strongly agree	92% agree of strongly agree
<b>Mandala Friends</b>	92% agree or strongly agree	N/A	92% agree of strongly agree	92% agree of strongly agree

A key aim of the work is to improve self esteem and confidence & self-esteem. We can see that the programme has been successful with this.

The following questions were framed as how often people felt a certain way. This is in-line with the person-centred approach we developed in consultation with UCLAN. The criteria are consistent with the WEMWBS wellbeing measures.

<b>Specialist Yoga</b>					
	<b>Feeling Anxious</b>	<b>Interested in other people</b>	<b>Able to cope with problems</b>	<b>Feeling good about myself</b>	<b>Feeling optimistic about the future</b>
<b>Pre Course</b>	83% often or all the time  0% rarely or never	8% often  0% all the time	0% often or all the time  85% rarely or never	8% often 0% all the time  92% never or rarely	0% often all the time  89% never or rarely
<b>Post Course</b>	0% often or all the time  31% rarely or never	46% often  31% all the time	80% often or all the time  0% rarely or never	80% often or all the time  0% never or rarely	89% often or all the time  0% never or rarely

<b>New Creative Wellbeing &amp; Mandala Friends</b>					
	<b>Feeling Anxious</b>	<b>Interested in other people</b>	<b>Able to cope with problems</b>	<b>Feeling good about myself</b>	<b>Feeling optimistic about the future</b>
<b>Pre Course</b>	58% often or all the time  8% rarely or never	17% often  0% all the time	33% often or all the time  41% rarely or never	17% often  42% never or rarely	31% often  31% never or rarely
<b>Post Course</b>	0% all the time  46% some of the time  54% rarely or never	85% often or all the time	61% often or all the time  0% rarely or never	85% often or all the time  0% never or rarely	83% often or all the time  0% never or rarely
<p><i>We have exceeded the 40% target decrease in anxiety. We went from 8% feeling anxious rarely or never to 54%.</i></p> <p><i>We can also see that the changes across the WEMWBS wellbeing measures are in excess of a 15% improvement.</i></p> <p><i>We combined the survey sent for New Creative Wellbeing and Mandala Friends because the participants were the same and it was advised that we don't ask people to complete two separate surveys.</i></p>					

### **Community Building**

A key aim of the project is building community with inclusivity at its heart and we are succeeding in this. We have become known as a safe and inclusive space for LBGQTQ+, neuro diverse, Muslim and Hindu women and those experiencing mental health challenges. NHS mental health teams and community organisations are signposting to us.

Before starting this programme we were aware that people tended to only attend one venue and stay in one part of the city with one demographic and we wanted to build community by bringing diverse people together. We have succeeded in this with people attending sessions at Plungington, the Community Hub in Fishwick, Sahara, Vine House and Mandala.

Participants are mixing with a wider range of age groups, ethnicities, backgrounds and challenges faced which builds community.

Because the Mandala facilitators work across a wide range of venues across the city and signpost to different venues, services and activities we are successful at helping people feel safe to go further afield.

## Partnership Development – Who we work with / how we learn

The Project Manager role has had significant success in Partnership Development and we participate in community events across the city to raise awareness of the programme and learn about community needs and as a result we now work very closely with, and receive regular referrals to our sessions.

### Referrals From

NHS Mental Health Support Workers	GP Services & Social Prescribers	Lancs CC Support Workers	Lancs Carers Network
Community Roots	NHS Pain Clinics	Preston North End Community Network	Preston City of Sanctuary Refugee Support

### Regular Partnership Meetings / Event Participation

NHS Health Community Days	Foxton Family Hub Info Days	Preston Community Network	Preston Muslim Forum
Healing Hub	Women's Health Conferences	City of Sanctuary Celebration Events	Lancs Carers Network
Community Roots Service User	Preston Coop Development Network	Fishwick & St Matthews Network	Caribbean Carnival

### Delivering in Partnership With

By working with the organisations below we each benefit from each others' strengths. We have strengths in delivery of person-centred, trauma informed sessions and the below organisations have excellent links with the communities they serve and knowledge of their needs.

Foxton Centre

Sahara

Preston  
Community  
Hub

Green Close

Vine House

### **What's Going Well**

Participation overall and consistency of participation is going well. We have strong diversity across the groups. The evening and weekend sessions are proving especially accessible for those with work and care commitments and we know that this is filling a gap in Preston as most activities are daytime weekday. Session feedback has been excellent and participants are growing in confidence and hopefulness and a strong community bond is being established.

We can see from the survey results, quotes and case studies that the sessions are helping people to make positive changes in their lives. Participants of the Arts & Craft element of the programme report that they use the activities on their own in-between sessions to reduce anxiety, reduce intrusive thoughts, feel less isolated and help them to sleep better.

### **What we Learnt/Changes Made**

We have learned that participants of daytime weekday Specialist Yoga have their participation affected by shift patterns changing, caring responsibilities, chronic illness flare-ups, hospitalisations and on a positive note, securing employment.

We had initially set the class up as a course, in response to focus groups saying they felt safer and calmer when it was the same group of people each week and that they liked the structure of a progressive course. However, the course nature is less suited to disrupted participation. Following consultations with potential and past participants we are trialing a less progressive course type class for the weekday session. There is strong demand and so we will auto-enrol those who are less affected by caring responsibilities and hospital appointments and ask others to book weekly.

We have found that there is strongest demand for our programme amongst people with mental health issues such as chronic anxiety, depression and PTSD and we would like to focus on these challenges for the weekend classes and maintain the weekday yoga class for chronic pain.

We moved the timing and communication around the weekday daytime Creative Wellbeing sessions as these were less well attended. We learnt there was an issue with regards to lack of social connections outside family for Asian women in the area and so we moved our sessions to after-school to enable Asian women to attend after school pick-up and before evening meals and this has helped us to be accessible to Asian women.

The Mandala Friends sessions are less popular amongst the yoga participants, partly due to fatigue issues affecting those with chronic pain and partly due to anxiety of mixing with



wider groups. We are consulting with them to determine if they would prefer different types of events or socials focused on their particular groups immediately after class.

## Case Studies

We are currently finalising a promotional film to assist with marketing and this features case studies. Below are case study summaries from our evaluation surveys.

### Female, mid 40s

This participant has lived with a long term health condition since childhood, was experiencing weekly panic attacks and has a teenage son unable to attend school. She was also experiencing workplace bullying which was affecting all aspects of her life, including her physical health. She has tackled the workplace bullying and started to allow herself to stick to the 4 day working week she is contracted for.

*"My anxiety is much better and I am managing my high stress job much better.*

*The sessions helped me recognise that I was holding blame for things that weren't mine to hold and as a result I was confident enough to address the workplace bullying issue for the positive.*

*I am much kinder to myself now and the recognition that I wasn't being kind to myself has helped me manage my life and chronic illnesses in a much more positive and gentle way.*

*I feel more able to cope with day to day challenges and feel more confident and comfortable in my decision making.*

*I have found this course so valuable and I am so grateful I was able to be part of this. I am going to continue to explore moving my body with purpose and kindness. I am also working hard to maintain a kindness to myself."*

### Female late 20s with Long Covid

Prior to contracting Covid this lady was very fit and active, since Covid she has had to give up her job and was experiencing exhaustion and uncontrollable shaking which she found very frightening and panic attacks when she tried to walk or do any kind of light exercise. She

*"I can't tell you how much the classes have helped me and are still helping me.*

*Yesterday I walked 5000 steps in one day without symptoms. I was actually shocked to see how far I walked... its the furthest I've walked since being ill and its really encouraging to feel like I'm making some progress."*

now is planning her wedding and is investigating training to be a midwife. She also meets others from the classes socially regularly.

### **Male Late 50s**

This neurodiverse participant with a history of bipolarism was experiencing chronic back pain and digestive issues and was addicted to painkillers. He is no longer using this medication, has taken up running as well as a daily yoga practice and meets another one of the course participants for lunch weekly.

### **Female, mid 30s**

This lady has MS, was experiencing PTSD, extreme fatigue and sensory problems and had experienced 2 pregnancy losses. She reports that she is spending more time with her family and recently applied for and secured a promotion at work.

*"The sessions have helped me learn to act with more kindness towards myself and those around me.*

*I have a deeper connection with my family and spend more time with those I love, doing the things we enjoy.*

*I feel calmer and more able to cope with the challenges of everyday life. I practice yoga on the mat twice a week but the outlook and attitude it has given me has permeated into every part of my life and has improved it."*

### **Male Mid 40s**

This neurodiverse participant had experienced a breakdown mentally, was fatigued and had suffered with depression since teenage years. His 3 children are also autistic and ADHD. In April 2022 he suffered a brain haemorrhage which left him with short term memory issues, fatigue, and anger/outbursts. He now practices yoga daily including when away for work.

*I have come to realise that a lifetime of autistic masking has simply been a lifetime of silent suffering and I need to shine a light on this and other areas of suffering in my life if I am truly to start living a life. Through yoga I now actually believe this is possible, I am walking taller than ever before and I carry an open heart to future possibilities.*

### Male, mid 40s

This participant was feeling very isolated and had very low confidence.

*"I needed to meet more people as I was feeling very isolated. The sessions have enabled me to connect with and meet new people, allowing me to develop new friendships with like-minded creative people.*

*I feel a part of a community of like-minded folk, who don't judge each other and show genuine interest in each other, which is massively important. It has given me the confidence to try new activities in other areas of my life, too, like movement therapy and music making. Things are leading on to other things in a positive way, and this is making me feel more positive about making changes in my life."*

### Quotes

*"My first time cocooned in the aerial hammock it was amazing. For the first time in a long time, I was pain free. It is hard to put into words what that feeling is like. When you suffer pain day in, day out, you forget what it feels like to feel "normal".*

*"For me this course, and starting to practice yoga has been life changing."*

*"I would like to say a massive thank you to Emma and the funders for making this experience possible. I would never have been able to do it otherwise and I am very grateful. It really has been a life changing experience for me. I was extremely depressed and this gave me a purpose so thank you"*

*"I am very reclusive for various reasons but felt so at ease at the Mandala. That is due to Emma and I also think because you are also there with like minded people who also have stuff going on."*

*"I will continue to be gentle with myself. I have learnt to not always hide behind the question "how are you" with a response of "I'm fine" and be more honest with people about my struggles or pain levels."*

*"Emma has given me a very good insight into what is going on in my body. I think with time and practice I will be able to greatly reduce my pain. Which will hopefully lead to less pain medication."*

*"I wanted to start the course for my pain but it has also made a massive difference to my mindset"*

*" Thankyou for giving me the opportunity to experience yoga for stress relief and giving me hope for the future."*