

What Matters to Me Engagement Activities



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What Matters to Me...*what's it all about?*

- Using direct engagement to seek the **experiences, preference and views** of young people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities and using what we learn to influence policy and shape support and services.
- Focusing on a group of young people who can often be overlooked in consultations or decision-making processes because of communicating in alternative ways such as through body language, facial expressions or using signs and symbols.
- This presentation provides information about the activities we carried out for our engagement to share ideas to others about how they can engage with more people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities to find out *what matters*.



Using this approach..

- Organisations or services may be considering how they can best engage with people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities and use what they learn through the engagement to influence or shape their service.
- This presentation explains in more detail the kind of activities we engaged the young people in for the project and acts to give ideas for how others can adapt their engagement to include this group.
- It is important that the **principles of engagement** are applied, By sharing the work we have done more widely, we aim to inspire organisations and services to consider how they approach truly inclusive engagement.



How did we engage?



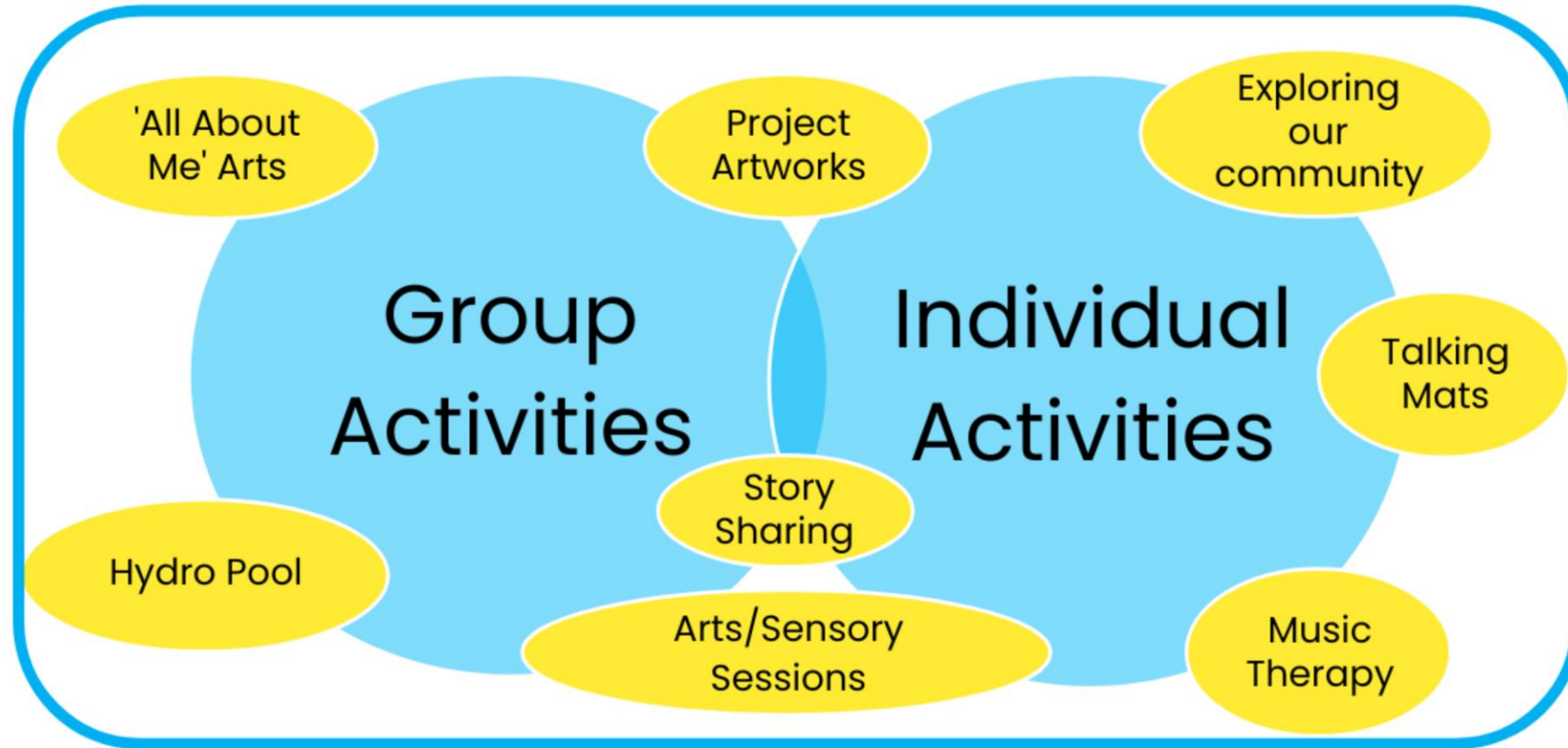
This presentation focuses on what activities we carried out in the project!



**PDF Guide on our methodology:
WMM Methodology: Using a Mixed Method Approach**



What activities did we do?



For the project we used a mix of planning and carrying out tailored engagement that we facilitated ourselves but also brought in other professionals to facilitate some sessions



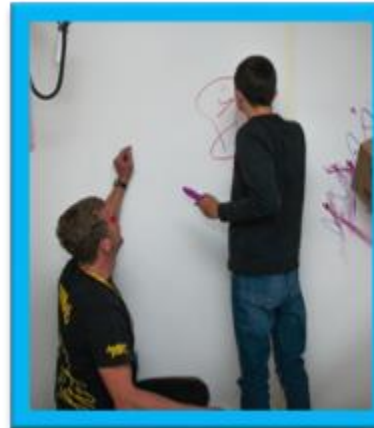
Project Activities

Project Artworks: Home – Project Art Works

Project Artworks ran a 2-day workshop at Ifield. Exploring, capturing and utilising individuals likes and dislikes to engage them in the creative arts session.

In these sessions individuals were able to express themselves through different means, during individual or group sessions.

Project Artworks also ran individual sessions with the young person we worked with individually at their studio in East Sussex.



Project Activities



Story Sharing: Storysharing | Nicola Grove

The project lead completed 'Story Sharing Facilitator' training and alongside Dr Nicola Grove led two 'Story sharing' sessions – one with the group at Ifield, and one with the group at Demelza.

At Ifield, we explored with the young people their existing outside space and gathered their input through the method of story sharing to what ways we could improve their outside area. Our findings from this session fed into the planning for the changes being made to the area.

At Demelza, we re-told the story from the swimming session in our first 'exploring experiences' day. This involved themes about friendship, play and the environment. The young people contributed to their own stories through multi-sensory means and communication aids such as Big Mac switches.



Project Activities

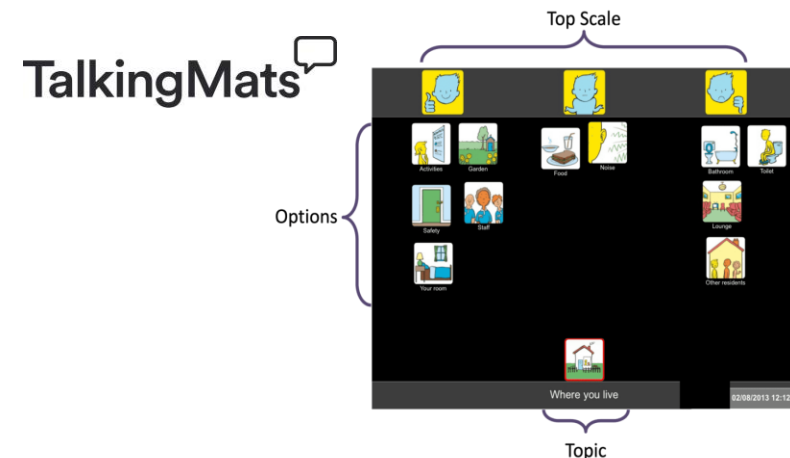
Embracing Arts: Inclusive theatre for children with special educational and/or complex needs | UK | Embracing Arts

Claire from Embracing Arts ran a multi-sensory session with 3 young people, looking at what they like in the summer. We explored all senses; touch, smell, sight, sound and even taste! Some young people expressed they preferred warm things to hot. They all expressed enjoyment at the lights and music!



Talking Mats: Talking Mats | Improving communication, improving lives

At Ifield we trialed the use of Talking Mats with some young people. For some young people it was a difficult concept to grasp so we couldn't be confident in their level of understanding and therefore the results. However, for some young people it gave us some ideas for future activities to incorporate things they liked.



Project Activities

'Exploring experiences' engagement day:

With a group of 4 young people, using what we had learnt about things they enjoyed doing, and what activities they interacted most with, we planned an 'exploring experiences' day to get some background and ideas for future sessions. The day included a group hydrotherapy session, individual music therapy sessions with Demelza's in-house music therapist and exploring a range of sensory and music materials. Through planning a range of small, varied activities, we were able to really become attuned to what worked best for each individual and what things we needed to consider and include in future sessions. The key aim for this session was to provide the young people with a range of different activities to be involved in, and being aware of observable indicators, observe and document reactions and use this as learning.

Utilising activities and professionals who are already involved in providing activities for the young people we were working with meant we could observe and join in to see reactions to different things they were already familiar with.



Project Activities

Home visit sessions:

Some of the activities we carried out with young people in their homes, especially with the young person we worked with individually. This included activities such as taking along different sensory items in a box to explore together or joining in on some activities they have been working on with their speech and language therapists such as symbol cards. We also looked at Talking Mats in these sessions.

Exploring the community:

Instead of carrying out a visit at home, for one session we met a young person and their family in their community. We had a walk in their local town, spent some time in the arcades and went to a café. It enabled us to see and join in these experiences to see what enables the young person to live a good life in their local community – such as accessible places, being well supported by family and/or support staff, and the impact on their sensory environment such as the lights and noises at the arcades.



When might we want to plan meaningful engagement to influence something?

Planning and carrying out meaningful engagement should be, and in most cases is, done routinely and actively in day-to-day life by people who support individuals with severe or profound disabilities.

What might not always happen is thinking about **what it means** for that person and using that kind of engagement to influence other things in their lives. For example, someone expresses a liking for a certain activity, thinking how this can be built into their lives more, or thinking about what other similar activities they might like to try.

What doesn't happen routinely, is professionals and organisations actively considering and planning for engagement with young people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities so they can input into consultations and decision-making processes.

This might be a service provider making changes to their daily activities – how are they 'asking' about the needs of this group?

This could be a local authority making changes to a short breaks service – are they gathering the views of people with severe or profound disabilities in this?

Or it could be a large national body making policy changes with a public consultation that requires a person to read or write in order to be able to respond – therefore meaning it is not accessible for this group.





The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

making a difference to the lives of people with severe learning disabilities

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