Voice and Power for Homeless and Vulnerable People through New and Emerging Technologies

Your Entry

Please do not exceed 1500 words in total.

1. Your contact details

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<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Creativity Works</th>
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2. Name of the project you are entering for The LankellyChase Digital Empowerment Awards

The Re|Source

3. Award category you are entering

Voice

4. Describe your project in one sentence

The Re|Source is a peer led virtual studio and community development tool, designed and developed by women in the criminal justice system.

5. Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg homeless agency, housing organisation etc )?

Currently The Re|Source is a community development digital tool creating connections and communications between women across 5 different partner settings:

- Teign Ward (a women’s medium secure unit)
- HMP Eastwood Park (mother & baby unit)
- One25 (reaches out to women trapped in street sex work)
- Rethink (women affected by mental illness)
- Bristol Drugs Project

6. What are the project’s objectives?
• Digital inclusion
• User-led, person centred (technology adapts to users feedback)
• Peer support (enabling groups to support themselves)
• Aesthetic Confidence (quality of creative work)
• Community Development

The project enables:
• creative self-expression and development of communication skills and skills in managing projects
• nurturing and developing relationships [with family, friends, staff]
• being a part of the cultural lives of their communities
• developing autonomy and confidence in making decisions about their pathways of recovery

7. What are the project’s activities?

The Re|Source works by Connecting:

• parallel communities in different geographical areas, e.g. attending the same creative courses in different sites
• different communities, e.g. those with mental health needs with artists through sharing their work and reflections
• individuals in custodial settings with others, e.g. sending their creative space to families and friends
• closed communities with general public and arts spaces, e.g. showing of private creative space & work through digital online exhibition spaces
• diverse audiences with cultural spaces, e.g. exploring groups’ creative responses to exhibitions/shows in art galleries and showing these alongside original works
• enabling independent peer groups to manage their own meetings, creative projects and on-line spaces and exhibitions

8. What has been the impact / achievement of the project?

Digital Inclusion and learning new skills:
Patty: “At first I didn’t try even try to do it myself because I’m really quite computer illiterate but once I was shown how to do it, I found it really good and enjoyed that part of the course... making comments and viewing others work was really interesting. I’m definitely going to try getting back onto the [virtual] studio and make more comments, I really want to make more and try and upload more images ... up until now I didn’t have the time, it takes quite a lot of time to learn those skills”.
Audience Engagement and Connections with Culture:
“It has directly fed into our key aims around audience development... it’s really made me think about how to introduce exhibitions to diverse groups [...] It’s made us think about the whole idea about people feeling welcome in this building, which we are working on but still needs a lot of work.” Arnolfini

Personal fulfilment and raising of aspirations:
“The joy and satisfaction of producing something solid she was pleased with, and others praised, was immense, and challenged her sense of being worthless. She wanted everyone, including friends and family, to see what she had achieved” One25

“It’s spontaneous, people’s reactions to seeing their work on the big screen has been really exciting. People were really impressed with the studio, loved to see their work up, it was nicely presented – adds a different dimension for people that are reticent about their work – they can see it from a different angle and the women were able to control what elements people saw – they could take a photo of just detail – “oh actually it looks ok up there”. People being offered that choice... empowering, sharing. Once it was up on the website it often got positive comments from the group – being a supportive group, friendships formed, a real bond, encouraging comments about other work.” Rethink

The Re|Source is a unique tool to be used in tandem with a creative programme and IT mediator, to develop user-led progression and development. Developed on the last Networks Course, it’s main impact was enabling women to feel part of a community. It met participants’ wellbeing aspirations, but also increased their broader skills and aspirations:

- 19 out of 23 (83%) of respondents reported that they now felt part of a group/community or more positive about being around other people after experiencing the Networks course;
- 17 (74%) felt participating in creative activities helped them learn about themselves or express themselves better;
- 17 (74%) felt participating in creative activities helped them learn about themselves or express themselves better;
- 61% felt as a result of the course that they were: developing skills and abilities, more interested in learning and trying new things and more positive about themselves;
- The Networks course meant the women became engaged with other activities within the community and raised their aspirations:
- 13 out of 18 respondents (72%) said that since attending the Networks course they were more active in mental and physical wellbeing activities;
- 11 (61%) said that they were more active in arts and cultural activities.
- 10 women (55%) had aspirations to go on and do another course, including two women who aim to go onto arts foundation.

9. How is your project evaluated?
1. Through in depth case studies with women

(The women tell us that they have developed communication skills; nurtured and developed relationships [with family, friends, staff], feel part of a community and cultural life, develop autonomy and confidence in making decisions about their pathways of recovery and develop skills in managing projects. Above all, some continue to meet independently of our courses and continue to use the online community engagement tool)

2. Through focus groups with professionals, artists, volunteers and participants

“It is such a good model, it’s so important to offer clients different ways for understanding themselves, finding an identity, find that sense of self which they lose through mental health and drugs. There is a need.” Bristol Drugs Project

3. Using our bespoke model of evaluation, with creativity at the hub, which incorporates the
The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

4. A critical success factor will be if we manage to successfully sustain and nurture the partnership relationships so that together we successfully obtain some new NOMS funding or commissions and if there is interest expressed by NOMS/MOJ to integrate the resource into their existing Virtual Campus. (Women themselves would help us ‘pitch’ to relevant potential customers.

10. How would you spend the prize money to develop the project?

- Tweaking of the software is vital to remove ‘Flickr’ and associated log in/upload issues so that participants can instantly upload their own images
- We want to explore if the prototype resource can be ‘sold’ as a community development tool across the NOMS, MOJ and Criminal Justice System as potentially a regional or even national tool which facilitates creative peer support, inspiration and motivation
- We want to explore, alongside the women, if we can develop the Re|Source so that women can engage more with their families to communicate in creative ways whilst in prison
- The women want to work with the developer to tweak and make it even more user-friendly and explore the potential to ‘sell’ their own artwork online and develop creative businesses for themselves