

Piloting a collaborative project providing Creative sessions for new parents and their babies

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Perinatal Mental Health Team . Arts in Health . Gwent Parent Infant Mental Health Service
(G-PIMHS)

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board commitment to Arts In Health

New Arts In Health strategy includes these objectives:

- To deliver a consistent programme of quality and evidence-based participatory arts projects in primary, secondary and community health care settings.
- To ensure that staff are supported and confident in using arts & creativity in the workplace.
- To develop and expand existing internal and external partnerships with individual practitioners, arts in health organisations and other providers.
- To gather evidence, evaluate and to establish (internally), and contribute to (externally) the national arts in health research field.

Funding

- The Arts Council of Wales have been supporting strategic development in AIH with support of the Welsh NHS Confederation for a number of years
- And now, in partnership with The Baring Foundation, is funding a range of AIH projects across Wales including this one
- Pilot work in our 1st year has provided the evidence base for successfully gaining a second year of this funding.

Context in the community

The health board's Perinatal Mental Health and G-PIMHS teams work with people who have experienced circumstances such as

- Difficult pregnancy
- A traumatic birth
- Relational difficulties between parents
- Difficulty bonding with a new baby
- Or even previous losses.

For many, these factors have been compounded by the pandemic and, now, the cost-of-living crisis.

The partners envisaged a value for these parents in

- Creative activities for enjoyment, self-discovery and self-reflection
- Meeting others who may also have similar experiences and struggles
- A chance to simply to 'be' in the moment.

Aims and intentions

- Collaborate across disciplines and teams; Perinatal team, G-PIMHS and Arts in Health
- A core group of professional artists with expertise in working with vulnerable people
- Emergent and responsive
- Reflective practice embedded throughout
- Support both parents and parent + infant bond

Taster sessions

Taster sessions for staff in the clinical teams supported

- Recruiting and referring participant parents
- Staff to be with each other and reconnect after lockdowns.

Structure: three pilot groups

Laura Mariner,
Assistant
Psychologist in the
G-PIMHS Service



Creative Group 1

- Mothers and infants
- Taster Session + 5 Sessions
- Led by Deborah Aguirre Jones (sculptor) and other artists, supported by Barbara (Peer Mentor) and Laura (Assistant Psychologist)
- May – July 2022

Creative Group 2

- Mothers and infants and guests (e.g. mum's parent or friend)
- Taster Session + 7 Sessions
- Led by Bronwen Wilson (dance and movement artist) and other artists, supported by Barbara (Peer Mentor) and Kirsty and Hannah (Assistant Psychologists)
- September – October 2022

Creative Group 3

- Fathers and infants
- 2 Sessions
- Music Theme
- Led by Alex Lupo (musician), supported by Kirsty and Gareth (dads' worker)
- October 2022

Sessions are

- Sociable and relaxed
- Negotiated and responsive
- Mutually supportive
- Often playful

Babies are a part of the sessions...

....together or separate within reach.

Core team of artists

Bronwen Wilson - movement and dance

Deborah Aguirre Jones - sculpture, 2D

Alex Lupo – music and sound

Additional artists

Mary-Anne Roberts - singer

clare e potter – poetry

Naomi Wright – photography and film

One or two artists facilitate each session

Close dialogue across the disciplines has been fundamental, enabling depth of work, informed focus on need and considered evaluation.

This has been made possible by a strong pre-existing relationship between the G-PIMHS and Perinatal teams, their enthusiasm and commitment to the project and an open-minded response to working with the Arts in Health team and artists.

Peer mentor and assistant psychologist

Artists running the sessions together with a peer mentor/support worker and assistant psychologist is critical because they

- bring understanding and awareness of the parents' circumstances
- Integrate these sessions into their wider support

Between us, there's always people available to look after babies while the creative activities are happening

Themes

Our initial theme was to attend to our bodies; noticing, honouring and caring for our bodies both individually and in relationship.

The creative activities offered a range of ways to approach, share and live with what was going on for the parents around this and other themes.



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Assistant
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Evaluation

**Creative
Group 1**

**Creative
Group 2**

**Creative
Group 3**



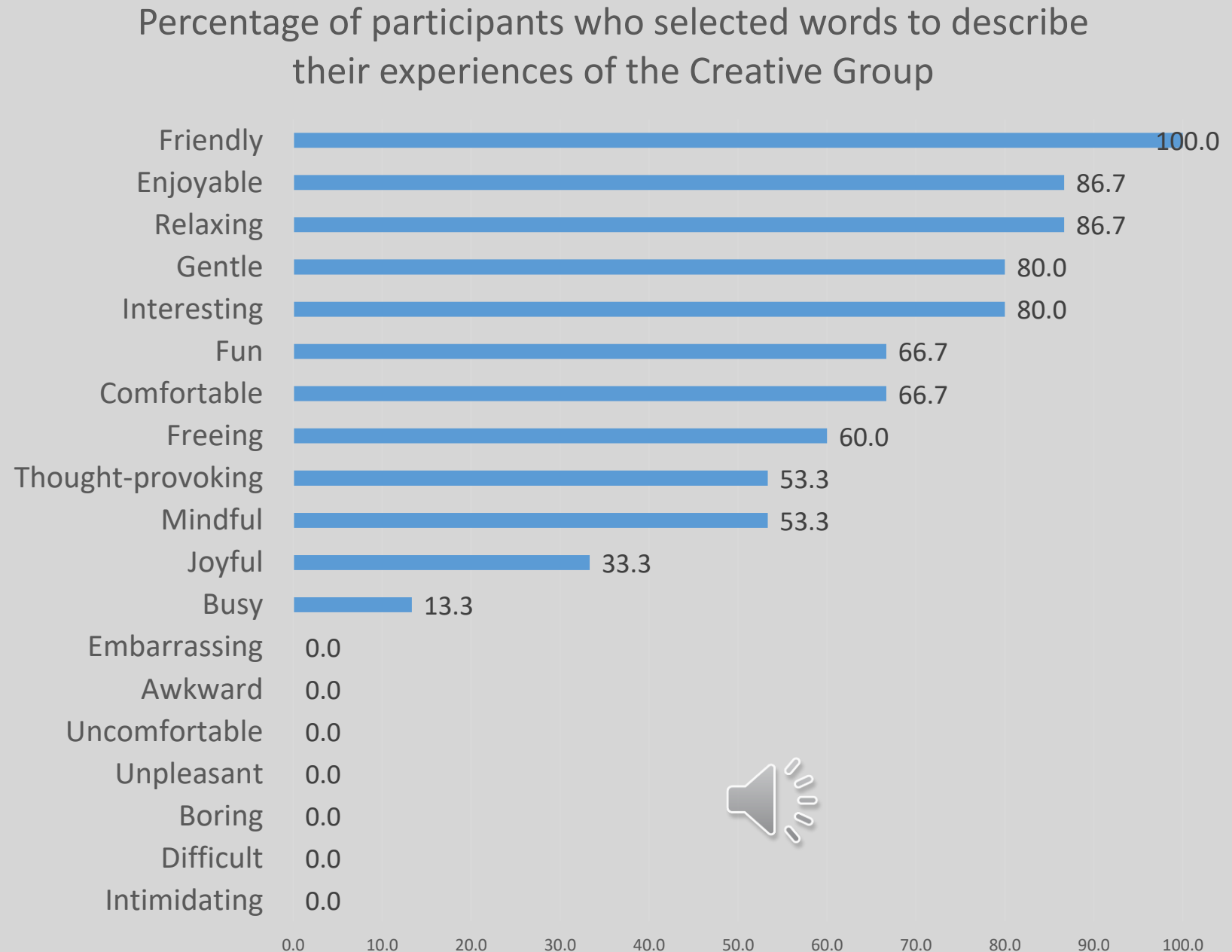
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In terms of our evaluation we asked all our participants to complete a questionnaire at the end of group. Of the participants who attended, 15 completed this questionnaire and so we have compiled this information to produce some outcomes which we would like to share:

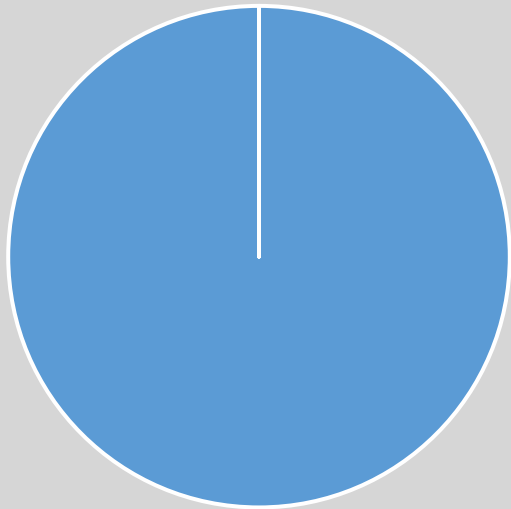
Evaluation

For our 15 participants, they were given a tick-box exercise to say how they experienced the group (with this list of words on the left). You can see here that 100% of them (i.e. 15 of 15) felt that the Creative Group was 'friendly'. The next most popular adjectives were 'enjoyable' and 'relaxing', both from 86.7% of participants. This was followed by 'gentle' and 'interesting' (80%), then 'fun', 'comfortable', 'freeing' and 'thought-provoking'. The only word used that could be interpreted negatively or neutrally was 'busy' (13.3%).



Evaluation

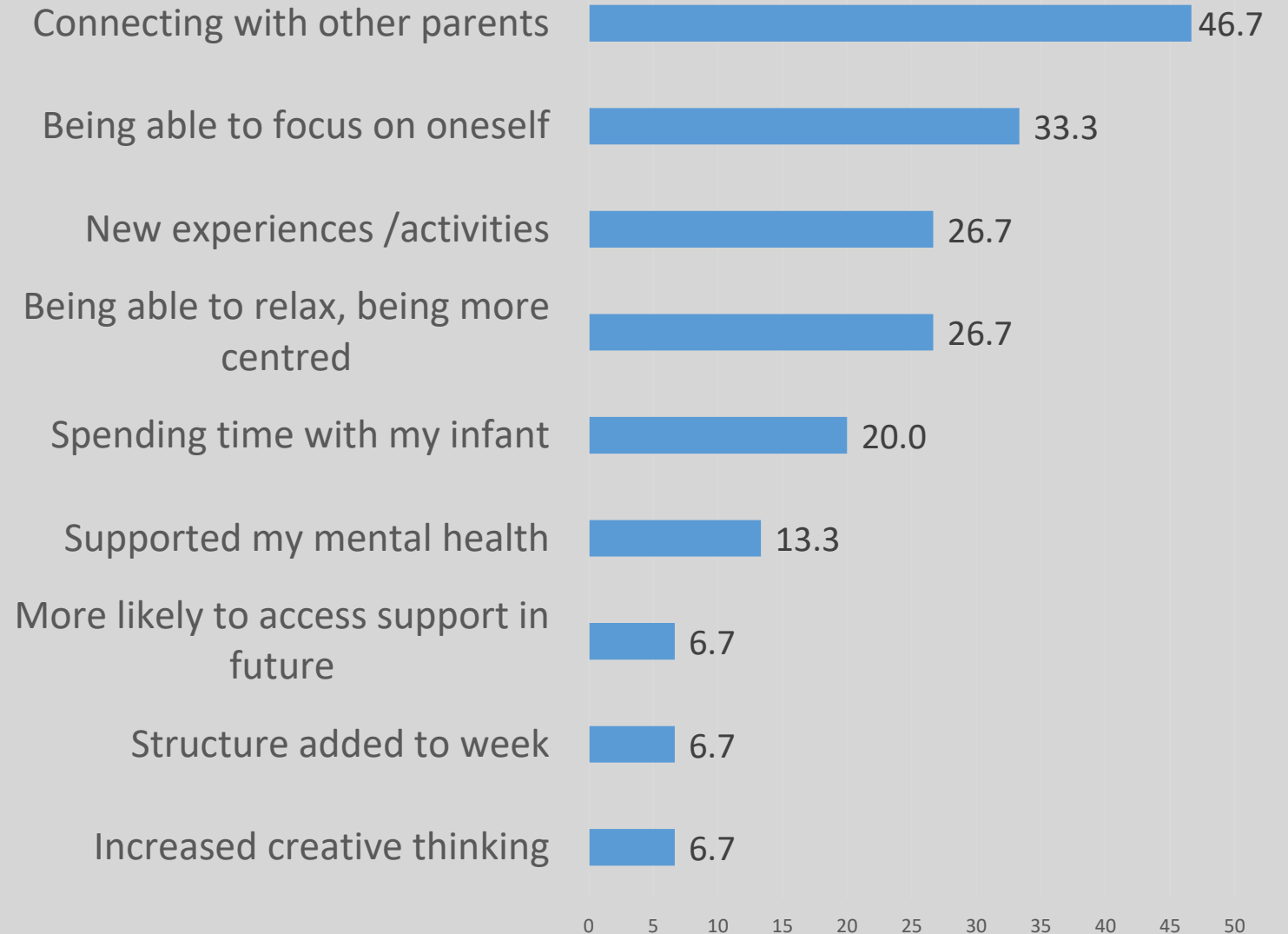
Have there been any benefits to attending the Creative Group?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Maybe ■ Not sure



Can you describe the benefits of the group?

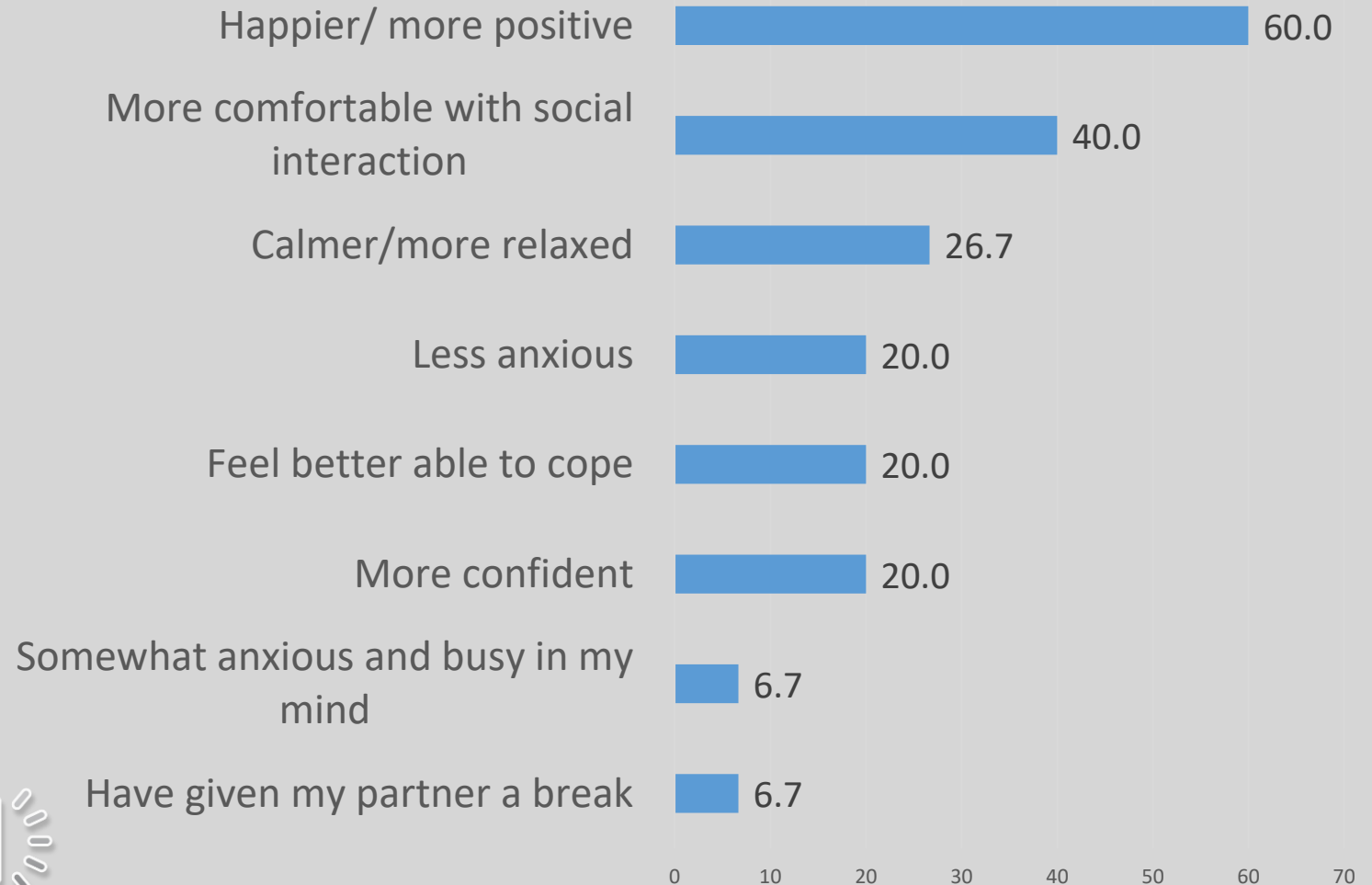


Evaluation

When asked, 'Compared to at the start of the Creative Group, how are you feeling at the moment?', the most common themes were 'happier/more positive' (by 60% of respondents), 'being more comfortable with social interactions' (40% of respondents), followed by 'calmer/more relaxed', 'less anxious', 'better able to cope' and 'more confident'.



Compared to at the start of the Creative Group, how are you feeling at the moment?

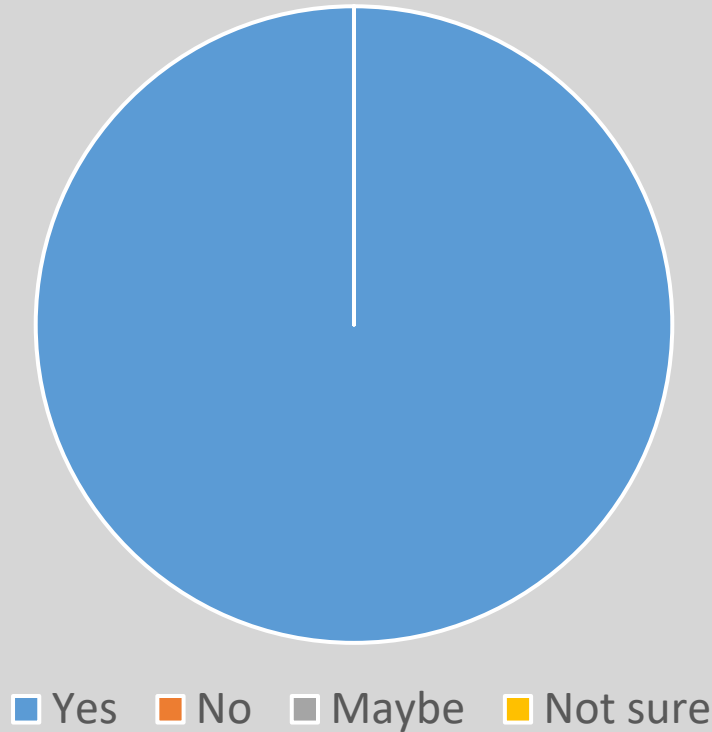


Evaluation

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Would you recommend the Creative
Group to a friend?



For more information on this project, ABUHB's Arts Strategy or wider arts activities in the health board please contact

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