

Practising well: conversations and support menu.

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Practising Well Conversations & Support Menu

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Author's introduction

I am delighted that this 3-month research project has now reached a holistic conclusion, not least because the process has been stretched over a long timescale and approached in snatches of time between the challenges of the pandemic.

This report is offered in the spirit of contributing once again to the field of research exploring support for creative practitioners within the framework of cultural leadership. When I first started out in my own creative practice, over 20 years ago, there was no mention of how I might process and learn from my experiences of working with people, but thankfully now the conversation has expanded and initiatives are in place that offer opportunities for some to connect, reflect and develop. However, practitioner support is far from being understood or embedded across the participatory arts sector, and creative practitioners are still bearing the brunt of this work in isolation whilst also operating in the most precarious of financial conditions.

Although this report is the conclusion of my thinking at this point in time, I also see it as the beginning of new and expanded conversations, initiatives and ways of working.

Please do contact me if you have comments about the research.

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About the author

Nicola Naismith is a visual artist and researcher. She has over 20 years experience working in the arts and was the Visual Artist Fellow on the Clore Leadership Programme in 2017/18. She leads the Reflective and Ethical Practitioner and Professional Practice modules on the online MA Art and Social Practice programme at University of the Highlands and Islands. She also works with organisations to develop programmes of support and training, and is a practising action learning set facilitator, coach and mentor supporting cultural leaders and creative practitioners who work in a range of participatory and studio-based settings. She is a collaborative partner with the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance for the annual Practising Well Award, which seeks to highlight initiatives that make positive contributions to affective support for creative and heritage practitioners working in health and wellbeing contexts. Nicola works as a freelancer and is based in Norwich.

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To Phillipa Reive, whose encouraging conversations and support led in 2019 to a Creative Thinktank at what is now Britton Pears Arts, where a generous and engaged group of practitioners, researchers and leaders came together to explore ideas of musician resilience within the participatory arts sector. To Victoria Hume and Hayley Youell from the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance, who have been encouraging and supportive, and who invited me to be a collaborative partner on the Practising Well Award.

To all the people with whom I reflect; my small group conversation colleagues, the teaching team to which I belong, the thinking partner who I work with regularly over the phone, and my coaching supervision peers and supervisor. Each of these interactions, alongside my writing, art practice and allotment working, provides me with much needed space and time to engage in what it means to learn from practice in a continual sense.

To everyone who took the time to be part of a focus group conversation or interview: your honestly and expansively shared perspectives, knowledge and experiences enriched the research and took my thinking in new directions.

And finally my thanks to Dirk Maassen, who I do not know but whose beautiful piano music has accompanied me throughout the research process, and reminded me of the potential of the arts to support reflection, change, connection and so much more.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to my daughter whose hand-drawn '*There is more than one way to be powerful*' poster has kept watch over me as I've undertaken this research.

Research Introduction

Participatory arts are proven to support our health and wellbeing¹. They are an opportunity for individuals and communities to explore, celebrate and confront difficult topics and uncomfortable truths. The work that takes place between creative practitioner and participant can be collaborative, intuitive and exciting, and can also be difficult, challenging and demanding.

In 2019 I published *Artists Practising Well (APW)*² which explored the affective support needs of artists working in health and wellbeing settings. That report was based on a survey to creative practitioners and a series of semi-structured interviews. The research found that the landscape of affective support for creative practitioners is mixed, with some receiving good support, while others aren't getting enough or any. In some cases a re-active approach to support resulted in it only being offered when requested, which placed the responsibility on the shoulders of the creative practitioner. In that report I proposed that if a range of affective support activities are made available and combined with co-production, joint responsibility and shared dialogue, practice in arts for health and wellbeing would strengthen and creative practitioner wellbeing would be supported. I made recommendations under the headings of Conversation, Co-Production, Funding, Leadership, Peer to Peer Learning, Recognition and Support Menu and Vocabulary³.

The report was followed by 12 months of dissemination activities, which included conversations, workshops and talks with a range of participants and audiences. Three key areas of comment and discussion repeatedly emerged:

Supervision is expensive	How do I have a support conversation?	When do I have a support conversation?
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Since those dissemination activities took place the global landscape has changed in ways we could not have anticipated. The combined effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the rapidly accelerating global climate crisis and the murder of George Floyd - which come on top of wide-ranging systemic inequalities - have given rise to individual and collective grief, anxiety and anger, leading to a combination of stress responses: fight, flight and freeze.

Creative practitioners will be living with and processing their own experiences of these events whilst supporting others through participatory arts⁴ offers. Creative careers are often built on adapting, flexing and self-resourcing, which embeds a coping and managing skill set. However the framework in which participatory arts is now operating has changed: social support has fallen increasingly to civil society, and the 'frontline' now includes many people working with the arts and culture. Participants bring

¹ All Party Parliamentary Report *Creative Health: the Arts for Health and Wellbeing* 2017

² N.Naismith, *Artists Practising Well*, 2019 Available from <https://www.nicolanaismith.co.uk/research-writing/artists-practising-well>

³ N.Naismith Ibid p.39-40

⁴ I have used the terms participation and participatory arts throughout for consistency, whilst understanding there are other ways of naming this work.

increasingly complex and vulnerable positions into participatory arts opportunities,⁵ which in turn leads to an intensification and diversification of experience for both participant and creative practitioner. Through the pandemic boundaries of practice have been altered, and the need to re-invent long-established and carefully developed practices has been demanding. New logistics have been worked out during the process of delivery, placing a further requirement to adapt on the creative practitioner⁶. Add to this the difficulties of establishing a career in the arts, the increased competition for funding, and the load placed on individual creative practitioners is unsustainable. There is a *culture of coping* in the arts, and we urgently need to gather more detailed and honest accounts of participatory arts work, reflect and then implement positive action. Only by doing this will creative practitioners have the opportunity to do what they do best - lead through creative practice, providing opportunities for connection, reflection, exploration and enjoyment - whilst also having their own health and wellbeing protected. Support for creative practitioners was already needed - now it is critical: this report focuses on practical ways to achieve best and sustainable practice.

My central research question for this report is:

- What are the key challenges to mainstreaming the ‘affective support’ conversation within participatory arts?

This central question was supported by three areas of investigation. Firstly, what evidence-based information is needed to facilitate conversations around affective support between the stakeholders of this work? Secondly, when should these conversations within the various project models take place? Thirdly, how is affective support to be resourced, and who has responsibility for this? In addition to exploring these questions I will include an updated glossary to aid a shared understanding of common terms.

What are the key challenges to mainstreaming the ‘affective support’ conversation within participatory arts?		
What evidence-based information is needed to facilitate conversations around affective support between the stakeholders of this work?	When should these conversations within the various project models take place?	How is affective support to be resourced, and who has responsibility for this?
Updated glossary of terms to aid shared understanding of common terms.		

⁵ Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance *Practitioner Support* 2021 <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/practitioner-support>

⁶ N.Naismith *Adapting / translating / re-inventing* 2020 <https://medium.com/cultural-institute/artist-as-researcher-practitioner-wellbeing-5a9ccadfd7a>

My approach to this research was to balance academic rigour with pragmatism. The primary audiences for this work are creative practitioners, organisations and commissioners who offer participatory arts activities, funders, sector support organisations and trustees; and the research is presented within a framework of contributing to the field of cultural leadership development.

Methodology

The research design is focused on a selected literature review, focus group conversations and individual semi-structured interviews.

The literature review explores research related to a series of topics. First is *Wellbeing at Work*, which has an organisational slant, as research into wellbeing at work for creative practitioners and freelancers is scant. The subject of *Prearity and Needs* is explored next, followed by *Reflective Practice Principles in People-Orientated Professions*. Both of these sections lay the foundations for why affective support for creative practitioners working in creative participatory practice is needed. *Types and Methods of Affective Support* details a range of practices, with the last section drawing upon a selection of *Associated Material*, which focuses on a recent research article, conference event, handbook and online resources, all of which explore or comment on the subject of affective support.

The literature review informed the questions for a series of small group conversations and semi-structured interviews:

What does it take for organisations to embed support for creative practitioners, and what are the motivations for this?

What characterises practitioner support going well?

How do you promote practitioner support, both to the creative practitioners you work with and more widely?

The focus group conversations added depth to this research and included a range of voices, including freelance creative practitioner, organisational, sector support and funding perspectives. A long list of UK-based creative and sector support organisations was identified - each of whom was already interested in and committed to practitioner support - in order to provide a platform for sharing quality practice, and decisions about which organisations to approach were considered in terms of specialisms and creative discipline. Each organisation was asked to nominate a creative practitioner with whom they worked to be part of a conversation and, following the focus groups, semi-structured interviews were arranged to add detail to the emerging picture. Freelance creative practitioners were paid an honorarium of £150 to cover their time, each contributor gave written consent to be involved and the whole research process was subject to Gray's School of Art Institutional Ethics process.

Since the publication of *Artists Practising Well* in 2019, I have taken part in a variety of other informal and formal conversations that have influenced my thinking. These included dialogues with individual creative practitioners, sector support organisations and peer networks, and through presenting and attendance at conferences. I'm also in regular contact with Masters level students who work in the field of art and social practice, and have benefitted from being part of a teaching team where knowledge and practice are regularly shared and debated in a spirit of collaborative learning.

There are limitations to the research. The conversation groups and interviews were small in number, and with further grant support these could be expanded. There were not opportunities to speak to individuals more than once - again, this could be useful in future studies as a way of tracking and evaluating affective support initiatives over a period of time.

Since publishing *Artists Practising Well* in 2019 there has been new research which builds upon the ideas raised in that report. Some specific initiatives are named here, but due to time and space constraints there will be good quality work which has not been included or referenced. New strands of work are continually emerging in this area: if you would like to highlight a project, initiative, or way of working please do contact me.

Literature Review

The literature review was undertaken first to develop a wider knowledge base around the research topic, before identifying the questions for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. There are 4 areas included in the literature review: *Wellbeing at Work*, *Precarity and Needs*, *Reflective Practice Principles in People-Orientated Professions* and *Types and Methods of Affective Support*. A small selection of *Associated Material* will also be referenced, which helps to build a picture of information, resources, events and other research in this area of work.

Literature Review				
Wellbeing at Work	Precarity and Needs	Reflective Practice Principles in People-Orientated Professions	Types and Methods of Affective Support	Associated Materials

Wellbeing at Work

What Works Wellbeing⁷ highlights that wellbeing can be defined as things we can determine ourselves: our own capabilities as individuals; how we feel about ourselves; the quality of the relationships that we have with other people and our sense of purpose⁸. Wellbeing is about people's experience, and whether they are struggling or thriving⁹. Simply put, it's about 'how we're doing' as individuals, communities and as a nation, and how sustainable that is for the future¹⁰.

Much of Wellbeing at Work research and guidance is focused on businesses with employees, with the self-employed being an understudied group¹¹. As the majority of creative practitioners work on a freelance basis, or combine freelance work with employment, I will focus on translating employment research into a freelance context. It is also important to highlight the different ways in which wellbeing at work is studied, which includes economic and performance-based frameworks, moral and ethical considerations, and health and wellbeing indicators.

The Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) *Wellbeing at Work* paper highlighted that since the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 fatal and non-fatal physical injuries have fallen significantly. They go on to state that in the last 10 years there has been a rise in the number of reported mental health issues, and

⁷ What Works Wellbeing are an independent collaborating centre that develops and shares robust and accessible wellbeing evidence to improve decision-making, and is used by Governments, Business and Civil Society. <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-us/> Accessed 2 August 2021

⁸ What Works Wellbeing, *What is wellbeing?* <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/what-is-wellbeing/> Accessed 2 August 2021

⁹ What Works Wellbeing *About Wellbeing* <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/> Accessed 2 August 2021

¹⁰ What Works Wellbeing *What is wellbeing?* *ibid*

¹¹ J Geraert, D De Moortel, M Wilkens, C Vanroelen *What's up with the self-employed? A cross-national perspective on the self-employed's work-related mental well-being* 2018 Apr; 4: 317–326. Published online 2018. Accessed 2 August 2021

that in many cases the main risks to people's health at work are psychological¹². In their Good Work Index from 2020, the CIPD name 7 aspects of job quality: Pay and benefits, Employment contracts, Work-life balance, Job design and nature of work, Relationships at work, Employee voice and Health and wellbeing. They believe that good work or a quality job:

- is fairly rewarded and gives people the means to securely make a living
- allows for work–life balance
- gives opportunities to develop and ideally a sense of fulfilment
- provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships
- gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- is physically and mentally healthy¹³.

In 2016 the UK government commissioned the *Self Employment Review*¹⁴ which focused on promoting changes to the operational aspects of self-employment, but failed to include any significant detail about health and wellbeing of self-employed people. The Stevenson / Farmer review of mental health and employers *Thriving at Work*, published a year later, states an ambition that employees in all types of employment should have good work which contributes positively to their mental health, our society and our economy¹⁵. The review specifically - albeit briefly - states that the self-employed are at a high risk of mental health problems due to the nature of the work, which can be isolated and less stable. They acknowledge that many organisations do not directly employ individuals, but could use existing channels to convey information, and in so doing support the self-employed and contract workers. The report advocates for the use of public awareness campaigns, and highlights digital applications which provide self-care toolkits and advice linked with NHS approved health and wellbeing support¹⁶.

Directing people to good quality self-care toolkits and wellbeing and health support can help with strategies and approaches, however this guidance is prepared for the general population, and doesn't address the issues specific to creative practitioners. Likewise, if sources of information aren't backed up with resources and practical initiatives, again I would argue their effectiveness is reduced. *The Care Manifesto* highlights individualised notions of resilience, wellness and self-improvement, promoted through a ballooning 'self-care' industry which regulates care to something we are supposed to buy for ourselves on a personal basis¹⁷. This consumeristic form of self-care takes time, resources and I would suggest confidence, rendering it out of reach to many. It also

¹² Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development *Wellbeing at Work 2021* <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/factsheet#gref> Accessed 4 August 2021

¹³ Chartered Institute of Personal and Development *CIPD Good Work Index* <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/goodwork#40068> Accessed 4 August 2021

¹⁴ J. Deane *Self Employment Review 2016* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/529702/ind-16-2-self-employment-review.pdf Accessed 2 August 2021

¹⁵ P.Farmer, D Stevenson *Thriving at Work 2017* Available from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658145/thriving-at-work-stevenson-farmer-review.pdf Page 6 Accessed 2 August 2021

¹⁶ Ibid p.56

¹⁷ The Care Collective (A. Chatzidakis, J. Hakim, J.Littler, C.Rottenberg, L.Segal) *The Care Manifesto* London, Verso 2020 p2.

shifts the responsibility for poorly-supported work solely onto the shoulders of the individual, ignoring the impact of unhealthy and unhelpful work-based cultures which are lacking in awareness and support.

During the dissemination activities for Artists Practising Well in 2019 a number of comments arose from audiences concerning the potential difficulties of offering training, development opportunities and support to self-employed or freelance creative practitioners. By offering support there could be a change in employment status, which may be undesirable for the creative practitioner and/or the organisation. It is not the place of this report to offer advice in regards to this legal and tax status, but I cannot see this issue as being insurmountable. Programmes of professional development are regularly offered to freelance creative practitioners by both contracting organisations and external organisations which organise the provision of support. It is also possible to increase regular rates of pay¹⁸, providing creative practitioners with financial resources to individually access support of their choice, or collectively commission something specific for a peer group. This realigning of project budgets will reduce the numbers of participant beneficiaries, but would reflect the true cost of this type of work: continuing to provide opportunities which benefit one group of people whilst being detrimental to the other is unsustainable and unethical.

Precarity and Needs

The reality for creative practitioners is that they are not always paid the rates appropriate to their professional skills and qualifications, and the expectation and practice of working extra unpaid hours is common¹⁹. Uncertainty around employment conditions and hours of work is widespread, and creative practitioners often continually seek work, resulting in financial precarity which is associated with poorer mental health²⁰. The accumulative effect of working in a peripatetic way for multiple organisations adds to their workload, and the need to negotiate different contractual arrangements and working with different approaches, management and leadership styles impacts on work-life balance. Opportunities for support, training and development can be found within organisations delivering participatory arts work,²¹ and in stand-alone initiatives,²² but as found in the APW research support isn't consistently provided across the sector²³. It can be assumed that not all creative practitioners have access to the support, training and development they need, and because of low annual

¹⁸ N.Naismith *Artists Practising Well* 2019 "Recommendation: Affective support needs to be funded in both freelance and employed working. This could be either through the provision offered and paid for by the commissioner, or it being recognised as a legitimate cost included in budgets and tenders submitted by artists for health and wellbeing work. Funders and Commissioners should recognise that these 'overheads' are necessary". p.39

¹⁹ E. Belfiore: *Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy*. European Journal of Cultural Studies p1-18 2021 Accessed 5 August 2021

²⁰ B.J.Gray, C.N.B.Gray, A.Hookway *Differences in the impact of precarious employment on health across population subgroups: a scoping review Perspectives in Public Health* Volume: 141 issue: 1, page(s): 37-49 Accessed 2 August 2021

²¹ Examples include Plymouth Music Zone <https://plymouthmusiczone.org.uk/> and Kazzum Arts <https://www.kazzum.org/>

²² Examples include Arts and Health Hub <https://www.artsandhealthhub.org/> Flourishing Lives flourishinglives.org Wales Arts, Health and Wellbeing Network <https://wahwn.cymru/>

²³ N.Naismith *Artists Practising Well* p.22

turnovers²⁴ they can often not afford to fund this support, development and training for themselves. Projects are often developed and written without practitioner input: this reduces the opportunity for their voice to be heard and their support needs embedded, and therefore the ways in which the health and wellbeing of creative practitioners working in this field can be supported and protected is not always considered²⁵.

In an article published pre-pandemic by the London School of Economics, *Underemployment among part-time workers may have detrimental psychological consequences*, underemployment is linked to uncertainty, reduced control over working hours, in-work poverty and reduced wellbeing²⁶. Before the pandemic freelance creative practitioners often faced the ongoing activity of looking for work, and lockdown mandates resulted in many creative practitioners being unable to secure any work at all for a period of time. This year the Health Foundation published *What is the Connection between mental health and unemployment?* which makes links between not having a job and actively seeking work, and a negative impact on a range of health outcomes²⁷.

Within the arts sector, and specifically for freelance creatives, the pandemic has placed further strain on already dysfunctional systems of seeking and securing work. *The Big Freelance Report* identified core problems within the performing arts sector, and although its focus is not primarily on performing arts practitioners who work in participatory settings, the evidence around employment and re-employment by the same sets of organisations is important in terms of affective support. The report shared that freelancers will do almost anything not to be thought of as 'difficult'²⁸ which produces challenges in terms of what creative freelancers feel able to ask for in order to do the work well and be well at work. The report gathered perspectives and experiences via interviews, and highlighted that many keep quiet and absorb problems when something goes wrong: this response was most common in women, and particularly women of colour²⁹.

Designed to capture a snapshot of the disability arts sector since the pandemic began, the *UK Disability Arts Alliance Survey Report* shows the majority of respondents were freelancers, with one third describing themselves as precariously employed or on zero hours contracts³⁰. The survey was not directed at participatory arts practitioners specifically, but they are likely to be amongst the respondent group. The report

²⁴ TBR *Livelihoods of Visual Artists – Summary Report* 2018

²⁵ The Artists Practising Well research focused on surveying creative practitioners working in health and wellbeing settings. I have made an assumption about similar levels of support or lack of it in Criminal Justice and Socially Engaged Practice sectors.

²⁶ V. Mousteri, M. Daly & L. Delaney *Underemployment* among part-time workers may have detrimental psychological consequences* 2020 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-psychological-impact-of-underemployment/> Accessed 10 November 2021

* Underemployed was considered to be defined as working below 30-hours per week in the UK context and preferring to work more hours

²⁷ The Health Foundation *Unemployment and mental health - Why both require action for our COVID-19 recovery* 2021 <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/unemployment-and-mental-health> Accessed 10 November 2021

²⁸ (Authors: Created by an unaffiliated group of theatre freelancers) *The Big Freelancer Report* 2021 p.18 <https://freelancersmaketheatrework.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Big-Freelancer-Report.pdf> Accessed 5 November 2021

²⁹ Ibid p.18

³⁰ Alistair Gentry *UK Disability Arts Alliance 2021 Survey Report: The Impact of the Pandemic on Disabled People and organisations in Arts & Culture* 2021 p2. Available from <https://www.weshallnotberemoved.com/2021survey/> Accessed 5 November 2021

presents three top concerns: 1. continued access to provision for disabled people in general, 2. health & safety issues, 3. failure to meet individual personal access needs³¹. Further, it states ten other barriers and concerns, which include anxiety about post-Covid social or professional mixing, racism and tokenistic representation of disabled people, rather than genuine change³².

Across the sector pandemic conditions led to work opportunities and contracts being cancelled or reduced at short notice in all participatory arts contexts. Where work was retained it was often reduced, and there was a need to re-invent for online or postal working. Furthermore, freelancers are most likely to have fallen through the cracks of government support, and they have reported high levels of stress and concern for their futures³³. Where they did continue to work it was younger workers and women who suffered job losses and reduction of hours at greater rates than their older, and male, colleagues³⁴. In *Culture is bad for you* the authors clearly articulate that in order to make it in a cultural job you need a range of resources - economic, social and cultural - which are not fairly distributed³⁵. When we arrive in the post-pandemic era, the situation is highly unlikely to improve unless commitment is made to the inequalities that many freelance creative practitioners experience, and recommendations are rapidly implemented through policy change.

Some individual organisations have publicly-shared ambitions for working with creative freelancers, communicating awareness of the freelancer position in relation to employed individuals working for the same organisation³⁶. Others commit to ambitions which have been mapped across the *The Big Freelancer Report* objectives of Fair Pay, Inclusivity, Representation, Transparency and Sustainability³⁷. If change is to be systemic and long-lasting, publicly recognising and acknowledging the challenges faced by freelancer practitioners - and particular groups of freelancers - is key, and needs to happen across the sector as a whole.

³¹ Ibid p.4

³² Ibid p.21

³³ R.Florisson, D.O'Brien, M.Taylor, S. McAndrew, T.Feder *The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 3* 2021. <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CV/resources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-cultural-sector-part-3/> Accessed 4 November 2021

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ O. Brook, D. O'Brien, M.Taylor *Culture is bad for you* Manchester, Manchester University Press 2020 p.2

³⁶ ARC Stockton Arts Centre *Policy for the Employment of Freelancers* 2021 <https://arconline.co.uk/policy-for-the-employment-of-freelancers/> Accessed 5 September 2021

³⁷ Norwich Theatre *Freelance Charter* <https://norwich-theatre-royal-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021/04/Freelancers-Charter-April-2021.pdf> Accessed 5 September 2021

Reflective Practice Principles in People-Orientated Professions

There are a range of specialist undergraduate and postgraduate courses which are focused on applied or social art practice. These courses often include placements and live projects, a focus on reflective practice and ethical approval processes. The central concern of these courses is creative engagement, with student peer-group learning providing multiple perspectives upon which to explore and develop practice. Creative practitioners also come to participatory arts via other pathways, including art-form focused programmes, professional experience and/or they may be self taught. As a result the ways in which practice can be applied in participatory settings are unlikely to take centre stage, and different methods of reflective practice may not have been discussed, shared or experimented with. Whichever routes are taken into participatory arts practice, valuable information can be drawn from the ways in which other people-orientated professions embed ongoing professional development and support structures to ensure quality practice is maintained and work is undertaken safely³⁸.

Engaging in reflection is a key component of practice within a range of professions including teaching, nursing and the criminal justice system. Even though all of these professions are operating within considerable systemic challenges, it is useful to explore the pedagogic foundations of how they view reflective practice and its role in processing experiences that arise as part of the work. These sectors have been chosen not because creative practitioners identify as belonging to these professions - on the contrary, creative practitioners are very clear they are not for example, therapists or health professionals - but rather that creative practitioners share workspaces with these professionals and work with participants from these contexts: an art class that takes place in a community care setting, a theatre company working in a prison, a music intervention in a hospice or a dance artist who works with children in a primary school.

Working in hospitals, prisons and community settings can mean the creative practitioner witnesses or experiences challenging events for which they have not been trained or fully prepared. Participatory arts is at its core relational in its approach, and requires both pro-active planning and re-active adapting during delivery. Challenging events or interactions have the potential to leave creative practitioners open to holding stress and distress, with potentially no outlet. Reflective Practice is embedded in the training structures within people-orientated professions because it is understood that challenges and difficulties which are left unexplored, unarticulated or buried have the potential to contribute to burn-out, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

Reflective practice has been described as being essential for effective and person-centred professional practice, and as a learning opportunity. It is acknowledged that the development of reflection requires skilled, sensitive facilitation and appropriate guidance and support from educators, supervisors and mentors³⁹. Effective reflective practice relies upon skills in self-awareness, description, critical analysis, synthesis and

³⁸ People-Orientated Professions are roles where the relationship between people sits at the centre of the work and includes but is not limited to nursing, social work, teaching, psychotherapy, probation work.

³⁹ S. Atkins & S. Schutz *Developing Skills for Reflective practice* in *Reflective Practice in Nursing* Chichester: Wiley 2013 p.24

evaluation⁴⁰. Reflective journeys can be surprising and eye-opening, painful and frustrating. Time and commitment are needed in order to capture the whole gamut of thoughts and emotions⁴¹. Engaging in critical reflection means facing incongruity, uncertainty and uncomfortable facts about yourself and where you work⁴². These delineations between self, profession, service provision structures and employment terms are helpful within reflective practice, as it allows for separation: on the one hand, what it is possible to change, influence or adapt within our own resources and those we are provided with as part of our role, and on the other hand what sits within the profession at large. In any established profession hegemonic assumptions are likely to be present, for example good teachers meeting all students' needs all the time is an ambition which would likely lead to feelings of incompetence and demoralisation⁴³. Reflective practice can help to examine these unrealistic expectations and situate more sustainable ambitions within a framework of realistic practice.

Critical reflection is also associated with problem-solving, and when things are going well and practice is good the perception may be that reflective practice simply isn't required. This would limit the inclusive nature of reflective practice, which can also include celebrating successes and achievements. To acknowledge what is going well is to identify the building blocks of practice, and engaging with reflective practice can be considered as a stance of permanent inquiry⁴⁴ to be curious about oneself and the context of work being undertaken. Critical reflective practice is not about, for example, keeping teachers in line, or completing an institutional mission; on the contrary, critical reflection illuminates and challenges subtly hidden forms of manipulation. The case for reflection lies instead in the pursuit of pedagogic, political and emotional clarity⁴⁵.

Advocating the use of reflecting writing in criminal justice education, Amie R Scheidegger shares useful insights into how students may view the process of writing: some feel embarrassment, shame or vulnerability - albeit initially - when answering reflective practice questions. She reports that students can also feel sceptical about how information contained within reflective journals and activities might be used, as there are likely to be admissions of mistakes and biases⁴⁶. The well-known Donald Schön model of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action is expanded further in Scheidegger's research, as she highlights the usefulness of reflection-before-action, using criminal justice examples: how are you feeling about visiting a maximum-security prison, and how do you envision the facility will look⁴⁷? This activity of exploring reflection-before-action is highly applicable in the pandemic context - how do creative

⁴⁰ Ibid p.25

⁴¹ C. Bulman *Getting started on a journey with reflection in Reflective Practice in Nursing* Chichester: Wiley 2013 p.225

⁴² Ibid p.228

⁴³ S.D.Brookfield *Critically Reflective Teacher* Somerset: John Wiley & Sons 2017 p.55

⁴⁴ Ibid p.80

⁴⁵ Ibid p.79

⁴⁶ A.R.Scheidegger *Incorporating reflective writing into criminal justice courses in the journal of Reflective Practice*, Volume 21, 2020 Issue 1 p.123 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623943.2020.1712196> Accessed 7 August 2021

⁴⁷ Ibid p.126

practitioners really feel about returning to in-person working? What are they expecting to see?

However, adopting pedagogic approaches and reflective practice from these other people-orientated professions will only progress the case of embedded and consistent affective support so far. Reflective practice can't fix a dysfunctional workplace culture, and nor can it improve pay and conditions, but what it can do is help individuals to reflect upon what sits with them and within their control, and what sits within organisational structures and beyond. Clearly, given the precarity which exists in the sector, many creative practitioners have to take work where offered, and the luxury of only working for organisations where affective support and reflective practice is both understood and embedded is not always a choice. The work of ensuring consistent and high quality support is therefore located at policy, funding and leadership levels, and in order to do this a breadth and range of affective support activities need to be understood, discussed and implemented.

Types and Methods of Affective Support

It's useful to consider the range of affective support methods on offer that include but also offer alternatives to supervision, which is often mentioned in association with participatory arts. A combination or menu of activities is likely to offer a holistic package of support: individual, collective, peer-led and organisationally provided; accessing local, regional and national contexts and developments. It's worth noting that although this research focuses on the uses of affective support practices in relation to supporting creative practitioners, these methods can also be used within teams and organisations who support this work, thus embedding an affective support work-based culture. It is unrealistic to expect project managers and organisational staff to support creative practitioners if they themselves don't feel supported.

Taking the models alphabetically and separately for clarity, I'm going to briefly explore the characteristics of each, and where research evidence is available contextualise the benefits and risks. Action Learning Sets, Coaching, Creative Practice, Embodied Practices, Mentoring & Reverse Mentoring, Peer Groups, Performance Review, Research, Supervision, Team Meetings and Writing all have something to offer those interested in establishing and supporting reflective practice activities which in turn support learning.

Action Learning Sets

The objectives of Action Learning include giving sufficient scope to individuals to learn for themselves, in the company of colleagues, how best to approach a challenge to which nobody can at the outset suggest any satisfactory response⁴⁸. Action Learning Sets (ALS) promote fresh thinking around unconscious assumptions⁴⁹. They offer space

⁴⁸ R.Revans *ABC of Action Learning London*, Routledge 2011 p.12

⁴⁹ Ibid p.17

for set members to each take the role of a 'presenter' sharing a question, concern, or area of curiosity as it is current being experienced - with clarity, confusion, a desire to explore or to solve. The set then works collectively to aid the presenter's thinking around the issue by asking open questions. The identification and implementation of 'actions' sits squarely with the 'presenter' and they alone are responsible for the ways in which they are implemented or adapted⁵⁰. The actions which are taken as a result of an ALS are not bound to succeed, in fact 'failure' - or rather things not turning out as expected, desired or anticipated - is material for more reflective practice, either within ALS or another method. Failure in a learning context isn't failure, it's simply part of the learning process.

Set members can vary in number, but are often 5-8 people who have common elements to their practice, for example creative practitioners working with early years dance, or with creative activities in dementia care settings. Once formed the set is usually closed to new members, with an agreement to work together for a defined period of time. Sets need time to work properly, due to the cycle of action and reflection, with the work that happens between the set meetings as an important action space. ALS benefit from having a trained facilitator to hold an introductory session and the first set of meetings. Sets can and often do become self-facilitating over time, as the model becomes more familiar and the set establishes a trusting working relationship. The set continues to work for as long as is productive, some meeting for 6 months while others extend over a number of years⁵¹.

The evidence base of the effectiveness of ALS is set out in a review of action learning evaluation studies⁵². Although not focused on creative practitioners, they do offer evidence-based insights that are useful in evaluating the potential of this method when used with creative practitioners. One study found that action learning yielded benefits such as increased empathetic listening, enhanced ability to formulate more informed actions and higher readiness to take responsibility and initiative⁵³. Members were better at listening, accepting criticism and being open with one another⁵⁴, with transformative learning experiences also reported⁵⁵. Effects are also lasting - 12 months after programme completion participants identified the following action learning processes as contributing the most to improvement in their leadership skills: learning from each other, taking action, asking questions, listening and observing⁵⁶.

⁵⁰ Ibid p.15

⁵¹ Ibid p.19

⁵² H. Skipton Leonard & M. J. Marquardt *The evidence for the effectiveness of action learning*, in *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, 7:2, 2010 p.121-136

⁵³ Ibid p.129

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid p.130

Coaching

Coaching and mentoring are often used as interchangeable terms, but they are very different. Coaching places at the centre of its approach and practice the belief that we each have the capacity to find our own answers and be our own experts. This is how it differs from Mentoring, which is often advice-based. There are a wide variety of models that can be used within coaching, including the popular GROW model, which is often used within goal-orientated working⁵⁷. The coach-coachee dynamic is built on trust: we can picture the coach and the coachee starting alongside each other, with the coachee leading the way and the coach following slightly behind, supporting the chosen direction. Coaching can also be informed by psychological theories and approaches: in his book *The Fertile Void Gestalt Coaching at Work*, John Leary-Joyce explores how when we take responsibility for our own learning and development we have two choices - try to be different or try to be more ourselves⁵⁸, in all our diversity and difference. Much like Action Learning Sets, coaching works when individuals are invested in the process, and can build a trusting relationship.

The evidence base includes the uses of coaching to benefit doctors suffering from burnout, highlighting how an iterative process of examining seemingly fixed thoughts and circumstances - with clients learning to question automatic thoughts, beliefs and perceptions, thus developing an ability to discern between facts, assumptions and interpretations - lies at the heart of coaching.⁵⁹

Creative Practice

The Artists Practising Well research data indicated that creative practitioners use their own art practice as a means of processing experience and reflecting⁶⁰. I would go further, and suggest that in order to develop participatory arts, creative practitioners need to have resources and time to prioritise their own creative development and exploration. This could be time in a studio, alone or with a peer group, where their own creative practice is explored and built - not with the express purpose of leading into the design of activities, but rather for its own sake: for enjoyment, innovation and nourishment.

When presenting and discussing the Artists Practising Well research after publication, the idea that survey respondents had reported creative practice as being a restorative and supportive tool was often met with challenge. Audiences, which included artists, would highlight the difficulties in developing a career in the arts as challenging and frustrating. A useful distinction to make is the separation of the creative act of say dancing, drawing or singing with the desire to earn a sustainable living from it: if the

⁵⁷ J. Whitmore *Coaching for Performance* London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing 2009 p.58

⁵⁸ J. Leary-Joyce *The Fertile Void*, St Albans, Academy of Executive Coaching Ltd, 2014 p.11

⁵⁹ G.Gazelle, J.M.Liebschutz, H.Riess *Physician Burnout: Coaching a Way out* 2014 p.509

*The paper includes extracts from the coaching dialogue which is useful reading for anyone seeking to become familiar with coaching (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4371007/>)

⁶⁰ N.Naismith *Artists Practising Well* p.29

focus is the art-making alone, the restorative qualities are easier to perceive, but understandably the business of making and the business of running a practice are intertwined.

The evidence base which supports the value of participatory arts work as an aid to health and wellbeing for participants can be equally applied to those who deliver this work. In short, the arts help us keep well, aid our recovery and support longer lives lived better⁶¹. Creative practitioners need opportunities to attend masterclasses, develop new work and connect with peer groups away from participatory settings. This in turn will help to resource them in the development of new creative ideas which can be translated into work with and for participant groups.

Embodied Practices

Embodied approaches to reflection can be considered as a way of accessing the knowledge of the body. Not all of the embodied experience can or needs to be 'languaged' or put into words⁶². Moving Pieces highlights how *Mindful Movement* can be used to regulate the autonomic nervous systems, helping to protect health and wellbeing. They describe how the effects of secondary trauma generally take place unconsciously, and how it is vital to safeguard this part of our body⁶³.

The *Creative Well* report⁶⁴ details learning and reflections from a pilot self-care project funded by Arts Council England via the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance. The programme was co-designed and facilitated by Roshmi Lovatt, an integrative arts psychotherapist, and took the form of a series of facilitated online workshops which focused on 3 aims: practitioner self-care, identity, authenticity and resilience. These themes were explored through creative and embodied methods, including movement and body tracking, as a way of unraveling the relationship between emotional labour and working with vulnerable people⁶⁵.

These practices are an important element in an affective support menu, as they offer a body-based way of processing experience, and can either be a primary support activity or complement other language-based methods. The act of creative practice itself can also be considered somatic: drawing, writing, dance or theatre all include movement, and from movement comes access to a different range thoughts and insights that help individuals to reflect and process experience.

⁶¹ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* July 2017 p.4

⁶² H. Panhofer, H. Payne, B. Meekums, T.Parke *Dancing, moving and writing in clinical supervision? Employing embodied practices in psychotherapy supervision*, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Volume 38, Issue 1, 2011, Pages 9-16

⁶³ Moving Pieces *Secondary Trauma and how to begin the healing process* 2019 <https://www.movingpieces.co.uk/blog/secondary-trauma-and-how-to-begin-the-healing-process> Accessed 2 August 2021

⁶⁴ H.Youell, D.Munt, S.Mackay, R.Lovatt with input from Creative Well participants *Creative Well Report* 2021 <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/Creative%20Well%20Report%20Version%201-%20141021.pdf> Accessed 5 November 2021

⁶⁵ Ibid p.3

Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring

David Clutterbuck describes mentoring as learning and stretching, supporting and nurturing, and goes on to detail how it can be used when the learner simply doesn't know what to do or how to move forward with an issue⁶⁶. Mentoring relationships can help both to unpick aspects of practice which are challenging or exciting, and can also be used to explore the career development of the mentee.

The motivations and positioning of the mentor are paramount. If the mentor is feeling unsupported themselves, frustrated by their career development to date or simply finds meeting with the mentee yet another task to find time for, the mentoring relationship is likely to be at best ineffective and at worst damaging. In fact, the matching of mentor and mentee is key: taking sufficient time and allowing mentees to meet with prospective mentors before selecting the person they want to work with will support a successful mentoring relationship. Narrow or large gaps in levels of experience should be avoided - too close in experience and it becomes a peer-to-peer conversation, too large and the experience of the mentor may be irrelevant or the insights and advice may feel overwhelming⁶⁷. Clutterbuck further suggests avoiding line management relationships. This is often well-intentioned within the arts, where a project manager offers mentoring as part of supporting the artists working for the organisation, but this excludes the benefits that can be drawn from an external view, and may also prevent the mentee from identifying and potentially challenging the set up and management of the work.

It's worth highlighting here the practice of reverse mentoring, where the less-experienced person is the mentor and may bring questions around value, core beliefs and purpose to the mentee, who may have a busy practice and can benefit from being reminded about the foundation of the work they do. Mentoring easily leads into peer learning, as groups of mentees may get together and exchange experiences, approaches and learning, and similarly mentors are likely to do the same.

Peer Learning

Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner define Communities of Practice (CoP) as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly⁶⁸. Coming together for a common purpose to explore, test and celebrate not only builds personal learning, but also contributes to the collective development of sectorial knowledge. CoP can be used for problem-solving, requests for information, growing confidence, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps⁶⁹. However they are formed - from organisational structures or from separate

⁶⁶ D. Clutterbuck *Everyone needs a mentor* London : Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2014 p.16

⁶⁷ Ibid p.53

⁶⁸ E. Wenger-Trayner & B. Wenger-Trayner *Introduction to communities of practice* 2015 <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/> Accessed 6 September 2021

⁶⁹ Ibid.

entities - they support practice when care is taken with membership, commitment, relevance, enthusiasm, infrastructure, skills and resources⁷⁰.

Any endeavour bringing people together can be challenging and complex, but members can benefit by creating and maintaining communities of practice which offer opportunities for connection, exchange, challenge, learning and progression of ideas and approaches. In health and social care contexts these benefits include: impact on the standard of care delivered, working environments and job satisfaction, knowledge exchange and learning, problem-solving, ownership and sustainability of changes to practice⁷¹. There is the additional effectiveness in having a collection of voices who are critically engaged and are able to articulate and promote the value of the work being undertaken. Peer learning occurs in a range of ways including informal - open discussions with changing formats and leadership - and formal, in the case of group supervision and facilitated reflective practice groups.

Performance Appraisal

It may seem odd to include a performance review or appraisal in a list of reflective practice and support activities for creative practitioners when most operate on a freelance basis, however some are employed, and some of those will have access to one-to-ones and performance appraisals. The measurement of performance can often be at odds with a process of ongoing learning and development, and they are often critiqued as being one-way conversations that don't affect positive change, or are focused on increasing productivity. They can be seen as bureaucratic processes which support neither the organisation nor the individual, however when done well they can offer a dedicated space to explore what has worked well over a specific period of time, and where future training and development needs may be. In his book *End of the Performance Review*, Tim Baker highlights the problems of a traditional approach which include lack of frequency, the process being a monologue rather than a dialogue and it being an exercise in form filling⁷². He goes on to propose a new framework of Five Conversations, each one lasting around 15 minutes and taking place once per month, meaning the whole cycle takes 5 months⁷³ and covers:

- Climate Review: Job satisfaction, morale, and communication
- Strengths and Talents: Effectively deploying strengths and talents
- Opportunities for Growth: Improving performance and standards
- Learning and Development: Support and growth
- Innovation and Continuous Improvement: Ways and means to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the business⁷⁴

⁷⁰ A. Le May *Communities of Practice in Health and Social Care* Oxford : Wiley-Blackwell 2009 p.4

⁷¹ Ibid p.118

⁷² T. Baker *End of the Performance Review* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013 p.11

⁷³ Ibid p.31

⁷⁴ Ibid p.32

These are framed organisationally and lean into the language of productivity, measurement and profit motivations. However, with some expansion and translation, these could helpfully support the building blocks of developing practice. For example, Innovation and Continuous Improvement could be framed as exploring new approaches to practice, which supports creative practitioners in the development of their creative offers to organisations, commissioners or funders.

Research

Undertaking research in the form of reading reports, books, blogs, attendance at events and conferences, listening to podcasts and viewing audio video resources positively contribute to supporting practice⁷⁵. Through accessing resources focused on new research, personal testimony and conversations,⁷⁶ questions and debates around practice can be considered. Questions that arise from research can be taken into other forms of exploratory and supportive practice.

Supervision

In some contexts supervision is used to support an individual in their training and development, in others it is a lifelong process of professional critique and learning⁷⁷. Furthermore, it is an ongoing professional commitment to reflection and analysis by practitioners who take individual responsibility to use supervision to renew and refresh their practice. In some roles it is voluntary, in others it's mandatory. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy sets an expectation that accredited members undertake 1.5 hours per calendar month, regardless of the number of contracted clients - this can be a mixture of one-to-one, peer, telephone and online⁷⁸. In its *Ethical Framework*, BACP states that supervision is a specialised form of mentoring, provided for practitioners responsible for undertaking challenging work with people. Supervision ensures standards, enhances quality, advances learning, stimulates creativity, and supports the sustainability and resilience of the work being undertaken⁷⁹. It can be undertaken on an individual basis, or in groups which increase opportunities for peer learning and development.

⁷⁵ Julia Puebla Fortier: *Learning and professional development for creative practitioners working in arts, health and wellbeing* Conference presentation for Culture, Health & Wellbeing Conference 2021 <https://artsandwellbeingpractice.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/fortier-learning-and-prof-development.pdf> Accessed 15 November 2021

⁷⁶ Arji Manuelpillai *Working with Migrants Podcast* 2019 <https://open.spotify.com/show/4N1mUH6TiP7Tyx6W23n73u> Accessed 30 October 2021

⁷⁷ L. Beddoe & A. Davys *Best practice in professional supervision a handbook for the helping professions* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers p.9

⁷⁸ British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy *Supervision* <https://www.bacp.co.uk/membership/supervision/> Accessed 7 September 2021

⁷⁹ British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy *Guide to Supervision* <https://www.bacp.co.uk/membership/registered-membership/guide-to-supervision/> Accessed 7 September 2021

Team Meetings

Regular opportunities to meet with a wider delivery or management team of any participatory arts activity offers the opportunity to both share operational updates and collectively reflect on the programme of work in real time. Including creative practitioners in team meetings (and including this time in budgets) in the planning stage, throughout delivery and evaluation helps them to feel connected to the organisation and the key individuals supporting a specific programme of activity.

Sharing logistical changes in a timely manner offers the creative practitioner the information they need in order to deliver the work. Coming together for reflection is a reminder that quality isn't something which operates in the delivery space alone, rather quality comes from a collective endeavour across the whole team: it starts with project set up and continues through delivery and includes evaluation which - in some ways at least - contributes to a sense of completion for all involved.

Writing

Gillie Bolton's book *Reflective Practice: Writing for Professional Development* frames the act of writing as a necessary contact with ourselves: she sees writing as both an expressive and exploratory method of reflection⁸⁰. The writing exercises she shares are foregrounded with a 6-minute write - which involves writing whatever comes to mind - freeing the mind through the physical act of writing⁸¹. Making the distinction between reflective and reflexive writing, Bolton explores how both can be used to professionally inform and discover. Reflection is an in-depth review of events which could be recorded in a journal, using writing to work out what has happened and what others might have experienced, thought and felt from their own experience⁸². Reflexivity is focused on finding strategies to question our own attitudes, theories-in-use, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions. Bolton proposes insightful questions which can be explored through writing: why did this pass me by? What are the organisational pressures or ideologies which obstructed my perception? In what way were my actions perceived by others? Writing can be a method to make sense of events, both directly experienced by us or witnessed from a distance. This approach to reflective writing can help individuals to explore a range of experiences using different exercises, for example exploring practice through narrative or metaphor. The writing can be kept private by the writer or used to inform other affective support practices - for example mentoring or peer-to-peer conversations or supervision.

Other reflective writing approaches include Bakers Four-Step Model:

- Identification - select an experience that stands out as significant;
- Description - thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the experience are detailed;
- Significance - capturing why the experience is meaningful to the individual;

⁸⁰ G.Bolton with R.Delderfield *Reflective Practice - Writing and Professional Development* London, Sage 2018 p.157

⁸¹ Ibid p.160

⁸² Ibid p.9

- Implications - which includes an explanation of the affect of the experience⁸³.

Structured approaches to writing can be useful in peer groups, where participants are expected to share what has been written to compare and contrast their individual experiences and approaches to practice.

Within this section - *Types and Methods of Affective Support* - some approaches will be very familiar. The use of mentoring is widespread across the arts sector, with the one-to-one relationship focused on the mentor sharing knowledge and experience, and in some senses being viewed as the expert. Coaching is also a one-to-one dynamic, but the work is focused on the coachee being the expert, with the coach holding a space of exploration in the service of the coachee. Similarly, writing a journal may feel like a habitual activity, whereas others feel more at home with embodied practices. What can be useful is to experiment with new methods and approaches to processing work experiences and developing practice.

Affective support activities are most effective when they align with the duration, complexity and frequency of the work being undertaken, and the needs and preferences of the creative practitioner. All of the activities in this section which include working with others can be undertaken online or in person. During the pandemic, online working has brought opportunities for greater inclusion for those who have caring responsibilities and/or face economic barriers which may prevent traveling away from home. Online conversations have the potential to be more inclusive if access needs are properly supported and pace, duration and approaches are adapted. In-person activity which takes place away from usual work or domestic environments - whether this be an hour, an away-day or a retreat situation - offer opportunities for reflective distance and fresh perspectives. Additionally, the conversations and interactions that happen between structured in-person learning activities bring opportunities for informal learning, which is highly valuable.

What seems clear is that a combination of the two approaches is likely to bring the greatest benefits to creative practitioners, each of whom will have an individual set of circumstances which will inform the frequency and preferred combination of elements. Some may be self-organised and resourced by the creative practitioner - keeping a reflective journal for example. Others will need to be resourced by organisations contracting and managing the work, or sector support organisations external to the work.

⁸³ A.R.Scheidegger p.123

Associated Materials

Since the publication of *Artists Practising Well* in 2019, research and practice has continued in this area. In this section I highlight a national conference, handbook, research article and online resources, each of which contribute to conversations around affective support and/or parallel concerns.

Conference

In 2021, the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) ran its conference *A Culture of Care*,⁸⁴ with strands focused on Culture and Health Inequalities, Climate, Wellbeing Economies and Mutual Support. The Mutual Support panel was a place to draw out current practice from a range of contexts: peer learning⁸⁵, autonomy in relation to a reflective holistic framework⁸⁶, the Cycle of Care⁸⁷, whole body and mind approach to practitioner self-care⁸⁸ and research⁸⁹. Forwarding these important aspects of practice within a health and wellbeing context demonstrates how necessary these spaces are for exchanges of practice, knowledge, questions and ambitions. The conference also played host to the CHWA awards, with the Practising Well Award highlighting and celebrating a range of nominated organisations and individuals working in this area of practitioner support across the arts and heritage. Now in its second year, the award is evidence of the growing commitment to this area of work⁹⁰.

Handbook

The Well-Being Residency Handbook focuses on the support for collaborations between arts and social and health care institutions, including a youth centre, orphanage, prison, hospital and nursing home⁹¹. The handbook lays out the responsibilities in terms of Risk Evaluation for the residency organiser, the institution or host and the artists; and contains sections which include an evaluation of the artist e.g. how do they react in stressful situations and how will they be prepared for this experience? Training, support staff and responsibilities are all included, as is the plan for a debrief for both clients and artists⁹². It highlights what an artist should do if a client discloses suicidal thoughts, a crime or a crime committed towards them, and makes links to the policies, procedures and safeguards which should be in place. Offering

⁸⁴ Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance *A Culture of Care National Conference* 21-23-April 2021

⁸⁵ Arts and Health Hub <https://www.artsandhealthhub.org/>

⁸⁶ Tracing Autonomy <https://www.tracingautonomy.net/>

⁸⁷ Clod Ensemble <https://player.vimeo.com/video/166819236>

⁸⁸ Roshmi Lovett <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/Creative%20Well%20Report%20Version%201-%20141021.pdf>

⁸⁹ Nicola Naismith www.nicolanaismith.co.uk

⁹⁰ Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance *CHWA 2021 Awards Shortlist: Practising Well 2021* <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/chwa-2021-awards-shortlist-practising-well> Accessed 5 August 2021

⁹¹ Well-being Residency Handbook Riga 2020 <https://www.wellbeingresidency.net/resources/publication-43025016> p.4

⁹² Ibid p.7

guidance about the artist selection process, the handbook proposes questions which are likely to elicit responses around levels of self-awareness, emotional intelligence and understanding of bias, and interpersonal skills. During the residency itself the psychological support needs and emotional responses of the artist are recognised, with the handbook describing how artists may feel overwhelmed and confused, or experience loneliness. Psychological support outside of the institutions - peer support from/with other artists undertaking similar activities, and emotional support from the managing organisation - may be needed, whilst acknowledging that project co-ordinators are likely to need support themselves⁹³.

Research article

Eleonora Belfiore's *Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy*⁹⁴ analyses the impact on artists of working on project-based, publicly-funded participatory arts projects. Specifically, the article uncovers the unacknowledged costs shouldered by creative practitioners, and raises issues of the personal and psychological costs, and ethical dilemmas artists face when working with participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. Further, it finds there are issues with a lack of training and support and unpaid labour, with one interviewee continuing to work with a participant a year after a project was 'completed'. The research indicates the extent to which the current project funding model is at odds with the relational dynamic which informs social art practice, which at its best develops over time in order to build shared foundations for working.

Online resources

There are a wide range of practice resources that underpin collective knowledge development, exchange and support. The Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance have collated a range of resources on a new Practitioner support page,⁹⁵ which shares research, networks and opportunities. The People Dancing *Developing Practice* pages⁹⁶ include *Perspectives on Practice* - a programme of online events which offers opportunities to join specialist conversations and networks. Collective Encounters *Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre* provide a virtual space for learning and debate⁹⁷. This is a selection of online resources, and there will be more: but however they are formed or wherever they are hosted, they are only affective if they reach the extremities of the network to ensure those most at risk of isolation have the opportunity to connect, contribute and develop.

⁹³ Ibid p.15

⁹⁴ E. Belfiore: Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* p1-18 2021

⁹⁵ Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance *Practitioner Support* <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/resources/practitioner-support>

⁹⁶ People Dancing: the foundation for community dance <https://www.communitydance.org.uk/developing-practice/practice-networks>

⁹⁷ Collective Encounters *Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre* <https://collective-encounters.org.uk/centre-for-excellence/>

Across the literature review a picture has emerged: creative practitioners and their support needs remains an under-researched area in terms of wellbeing at work and understanding the impact of support initiatives in the longer term. Freelancers face particular difficulties with the precarious nature of participatory arts work and these difficulties are exacerbated for particular groups. There is a widespread and unhelpful *culture of coping*. Reflective practice is an established pedagogic approach in professions where working with people is the centre of the work: promoting its usefulness in supporting *curiosity* and *processing of experience* will support its expanded uses within the participatory arts sector. Creative practitioners can create individual support menus which combine self-resourced practices with those provided by organisations or separate initiatives. Events, information, research and online resources around this area of work are growing; providing data, testimony and evidence and leading to expansive discussion and new ways of working, from which new knowledge can develop.

Focus group conversations and semi-structured interview analysis

The literature review informed three core questions, which framed both the focus group conversations and interviews. Groups were a mixture of one organisational lead, a sector support organisation or funder, and a creative practitioner. Interviews were undertaken on a one-to-one basis. Focus group conversations were around 1.5 hours, with interviews varying between 30-90 minutes. All contributors were sent the research questions in advance:

What does it take for organisations to embed support for creative practitioners, and what are the motivations for this?

What characterises practitioner support going well?

How do you promote practitioner support, both to the creative practitioners you work with and more widely?

Across the focus group conversations there was expertise from dance, drama, music, theatre, visual arts and writing. Collectively they had experience of a wide landscape of practice, including working with children and young people, adults, and older people in a range of contexts - including health & mental health, criminal justice and detention centres - and across community settings, defined by geography and common experiences⁹⁸. A variety of leadership styles and approaches were represented. Across the two focus groups and three interviews a range of connected concerns were expressed, each providing rich material upon which to reflect.

In focus group one, barriers to support were clearly articulated, in terms of need or appearing to be needy, and economically being able to prioritise support activities when offered. The relationship between individual responsibility on the part of the creative practitioner and the organisational responsibility was also discussed, with suggestions that clusters of organisations could share responsibility to offer support initiatives. The need for support to be embedded - and not tokenistic - was also expressed, and that consultation with creative practitioners is key in forming appropriate support offers.

Across focus group two, contributors spoke about the need to have support embedded across all projects, and the need for that to be understood at funding level. There was a feeling that support needs to be relevant and responsive to all parts of a project journey, and that creative practitioners need to be given the opportunity to grow and develop. The ways in which support structures can bring new voices into areas of practice - mitigating against a possible echo-chamber effect - was also deemed to be important.

⁹⁸ The Focus Group Conversations and Interviewees were Samantha Adams (Dramatherapist, Executive Member of the British Association of Dramatherapists), Anna Batson (Creativity & Learning Director, Plymouth Music Zone), Tracy Breathnach (Programme Manager, Wales Arts Health Wellbeing Network), David Cutler (Director, The Baring Foundation), Alex Evans (Artistic Director Kazzum Arts), Anna Herrmann (Joint Artistic Director, Clean Break Theatre Company), Arji Manuelpillai (Poet, rapper, performer and education artist), Jodie Saunders (Sound Artist), Chris Stenton (Executive Director, People Dancing).

The interviews brought to the fore that the impact of managing self-employment and working with a relatively small practice specialism can lead to isolation, which is further exacerbated by working for multiple organisations. The prompt issuing of contracts and fast paying of invoices was highlighted as being supportive, and how taking care of these instrumental elements communicates respect and value. Consistency of practice was identified as being key: working to shared standards but not standardising practice, and the importance of induction and orientation, regular reviews, debriefs and opportunities to reflect together.

To structure the focus group and interview materials I have identified four key areas for discussion:

Impact of isolation and precarity	Symbiotic relationship between Instrumental and Affective support	Role of consultation and choice	Awareness of the barriers to accessing affective support
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Impact of isolation and precarity

Generally, the work of creative practitioners in participatory settings was felt to be isolating, with a number of contributing factors for this: the breadth of individual creative practices and approaches, working within a relatively small specialism and/or a practice informed by individual identity, or a specific approach. Geographic location also has an impact, with some regionally-based activities having relatively small peer groups with which to connect. It is also common practice for creative practitioners to work for multiple organisations, which may bring with it different communication methods, invoicing processes, scheduling and working practices.

The impact of late contracts, which when they arrive don't sufficiently cover preparation, planning, team meetings and evaluation activities, reinforces the precarious position of creative practitioners. There are likely times when contracts are absent, with project parameters and pay arrangements shared across a series of emails or phone calls, which in itself increases administrative burden. Having to ask for inductions, safety briefings, and introductions to key team members again puts the responsibility of connecting and working with an organisation on the shoulders of the creative practitioner. Few are the number of creative practitioners who haven't at one stage or another had to chase late payment of invoices - for some I suspect this is a regular occurrence. Multiply all these factors - contracts, inductions, payment - across a range of organisations with whom the creative practitioner works, and the result is an accumulating workload which can lead to feeling overwhelmed. Evidence from the literature review backs up the position that self-employment in itself is isolating - practically having to organise everything - and that in turn has an impact on mental health. It's worth noting that self-employment sometimes comes about as a necessity and not necessarily preference.

Symbiotic Relationship between Instrumental and Affective Support

In the Artists Practising Well report Instrumental and Affective support⁹⁹ were separated, with the focus being on Affective support as a way of understanding the moods, feelings and attitudes that may arise as part of working creatively with people, and how these could be processed and supported through reflective practice activities. The contributors to this research reflected that while many organisations do this work well, others are less effective. This inconsistency is perhaps due to how well the complexity of the freelance position and the work itself are understood. Thus not all participatory arts work is held within 'solid foundations', and subsequently it is left to the creative practitioner to stabilise this situation through accommodating and adapting, which I would argue places additional and unnecessary burdens upon them.

The foundations of the timely provision of fair contracts, inductions, allocated planning, debrief and evaluation time, clarity over roles and responsibilities, agreed methods of communication and their regularity, inductions and introductions to key staff and prompt payment of invoices all demonstrate a commitment to creative practitioners. In addition to these aspects it is important that any support conversation is not a single occurrence, but rather a series of conversations which may take the form of team meetings or debrief sessions before, during and after the work has taken place. The combination of these elements communicate an understanding of the situations many creative practitioners find themselves operating within, which include managing financial precarity and peripatetic working, in addition to managing their own care needs and those of others. Wider experiences also need to be considered if we want to have a creative practitioner workforce which is representative of our population and communities: individuals are already facing daily occurrences of discrimination in the form of ableism, classism and racism, all of which contribute to a person's everyday experience.

Neglecting to sufficiently cover elements of instrumental support, or to do this work in a timely manner, indicates re-active management or leadership styles, which often results in additional work and stress for creative practitioners. The picture also includes the re-active approach to affective support after something has gone 'wrong'. This is akin to providing support when requested,¹⁰⁰ which limits the choice of support and could be something that is offered to suit the needs, preferences and time available to the manager, rather than the creative practitioner. Taking a pro-active approach to both forms of support increases the timely dissemination of information and opportunities, and is far more likely to include choice and invite discussion. Furthermore it builds trust, a key component for effective and productive working. Organisations who do this work well understand the multiple benefits on offer: it supports the creative practitioner individually and with practice development, underpins the diversification of the workforce, strengthens the experience of participants, and feeds into organisational reviews and sectorial learning.

⁹⁹ N.Naismith *Artists Practising Well* p.8

¹⁰⁰ N.Naismith *Artists Practising Well* p.29

Quality practice, whether at the point of delivery, during communication exchanges or through support activities, is best approached by planning in advance - we know this, yet something gets in the way. I haven't surveyed project managers and leaders working in this field of practice, but likely reasons include the pressure to deliver more with the same resources, moving into new areas of practice without appropriate training and support, a lack of time and small teams with multiple roles. The additional stresses and demands of the pandemic - the impact of the furlough scheme and the cessation or rapid re-invention of provision - will undoubtedly also have an effect.

Role of consultation and choice

Individual wellbeing is always subject to change: we all live with a range of experiences, histories and everyday challenges, and have differing personal or domestic circumstances which when combined with challenging work activities precipitates the need for differentiated support. Simply embedding wellbeing training in an induction programme will not alone support wellbeing in the workplace unless a positive work culture is developed which includes creative practitioners. Quality practice for participants takes into account specific participant needs and preferences, and doesn't assume that these are fixed - flexibility is therefore key. It is entirely possible for this approach to be adapted to support creative practitioners with an expectation their needs and preferences are likely to change over time. For example working with a mentor at an early career developmental stage may later be replaced with or complemented by a cross-discipline peer group or supervision. Developing a flexible support framework which can be managed operationally and provide the necessary elements creative practitioners need is best achieved through collaborative consultation. Problems are likely to occur when choices about support are made by an organisations without proper consultation with creative practitioners and/or they rely on limited sources of information linked to their own preferences or convenience. If the fit between creative practitioner and support offer is mismatched the result is likely to be unproductive, and potentially alienating.

In order for creative practitioners to find out what works best for them, they need opportunities to experiment with different types of affective support. How can creative practitioners feel confident in putting forward requests for Action Learning Sets or individual coaching if they haven't had an opportunity to experience them in practice? Experimentation and taster sessions will allow creative practitioners to develop an experientially informed awareness of their own preferred methods of support. It's worth highlighting here that affective support isn't binary - it's not a case of needing support or not - rather it's a more nuanced picture, involving an unfolding group of practices which offer support, reflection and development. This picture of support also includes the need for opportunities to connect in informal ways: collective creative exploration or play, walks or social events that take place at a range of times and in different settings.

Some creative practitioners work in more highly populated areas, and may work for a small number of organisations, so sharing the responsibility for providing affective support is possible. Outside of cities and large conurbations peer groups can be close-knit, which can potentially lead to echo chambers of reflection and practice. No one

support system will suit everyone: a range of activities from a support menu will provide a holistic and distributed network of support, with a local peer group providing shared experiences and challenges connected with place, and national events bringing together a greater diversity of voices and experiences. No one element is necessarily better than the other - it is the interconnection of affective support practices which leads to holistic affective support.

Central to any support offer is the baseline understanding that the sector must meet creative practitioners where they are - with all their strengths and expertise, their doubts and difficulties - for only then will it meet individual need and have positive impact. In order to know to what extent these initiatives are effective evaluation needs to be in place - without it key learning cannot be identified and shared, and subsequently the pace of change becomes too slow.

Awareness of the barriers to accessing affective support

The contributors commented that creative practitioners welcome offers of affective support activities, with information being widely shared on social media; however this doesn't always translate to activity booking and attendance. I propose three areas which may help understand what is happening:

That coping is normalised in this field of work.

That there is a need to prioritise paid work.

That accessing support is seen as a sign of weakness.

Firstly is an understanding that support is needed, but creative practitioners may not identify as being *in need* or *in need enough*. Furthermore, signing up for an affective support programme may be seen as an indication of *not coping*: if support is being provided by an organisation who is contracting the creative practitioner there may also be a hesitancy about looking needy or being labeled as such. The very nature of creative practice development is based - for many - on adapting, making do and finding creative solutions with limited resources; in other words coping and still managing to produce quality work. Within the field of participatory arts, feelings of continually *coping* and *managing* could be indicators that additional support is required which when accessed can help to facilitate the transition from surviving to thriving. Secondly, economic necessity is likely to affect rates of attendance, as turning down paid work to prioritise reflection activities or a peer-led session is not possible for a significant section of the creative practitioner workforce as referenced in the literature review. Thirdly, many creative practitioners come into this work from creative practice-based courses or are self taught - they may have had little introduction to participatory arts working or the effects the work can have. Advocating for the role affective support has in taking care of creative practitioner wellbeing will increase awareness and understanding of its importance in contributing to quality practice, and how it can be used to help identify what is going well. Affective support isn't about fixing people, making everyone the same, or solely preventing burnout; rather it is designed to enable the processing of experiences, development of practice and the protection of wellbeing. A good outcome of any reflective activity is one which leads to a request for help, which - when made - needs to be respected and supported.

Within a range of affective support opportunities it is important to consider how initiatives are evaluated, to support the production of an evidence base specifically for this area of work¹⁰¹. In order to understand impact of organisational and sector support initiatives, longitudinal studies which focus on following individual creative practitioners¹⁰² need to be designed to measure personal change, rather than seeking to measure against an expected standard. In any case, no such standards framework currently exists across participatory arts as a whole. I'm not arguing for a quality framework or against it, rather I would at this stage advocate for a focus on understanding individual change, and in so doing acknowledge differing starting points and understand who has access to development opportunities. Taking into account the baseline operating conditions of that individual - have they or are experiencing for example ableism, classism and/or racism in addition to undertaking potentially challenging work - needs to inform the ways in which support is offered. Taking the equity approach - allocating resources based on need - provides an opportunity for everyone to practice well.

¹⁰¹ The Centre for Cultural Value has recently published its *Evaluation Principles* which shares ideas about how to carry out evaluation. <https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/our-work/evaluation/evaluation-principles/>

¹⁰² For example this could include the *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale* <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been to draw out strands from the 2019 Artists Practising Well report. For this research there was one over-arching question, with 3 areas of investigation and an ambition to offer an updated glossary of common terms.

What are the key challenges to mainstreaming the 'affective support' conversation within participatory arts?		
What evidence-based information is needed to facilitate conversations around affective support between the stakeholders of this work?	When should these conversations within the various project models take place?	How is affective support to be resourced, and who has responsibility for this?
Updated glossary of terms to aid shared understanding of common terms.		

The literature review mapped a range of subject areas: *Wellbeing at Work*, *Precarity and Needs*, *Reflective Practice Principles in People-Orientated Professions*, *Types and Methods of Affective Support* and a selection of *Associated Materials*. Published research studies, reviews and reports were referenced as a method by which to build a picture of why affective support is needed, and why so critically at this time.

Wellbeing at Work literature tends to be focused on employment contexts, and while there are some specialist self-employed studies, they don't look specifically at creative practitioners. What evidence does show is that self-employed people are at high risk of mental health problems due to the nature of the work, which can be isolated and less stable. If project budgets are realigned to include support costs for creative practitioners then participant numbers will decrease, but this is simply a reflection of the true cost of this type of work, and continuing to provide opportunities which benefit one group of people whilst being detrimental to the other is unsustainable and unethical. *Precarity and Needs* maps out the reality of the financial situations and uneven power dynamics which creative practitioners find themselves operating within, and the impact of ineffective instrumental support structures which result in more work and burden on individuals.

By introducing *Reflective Practice Principles in People-Orientated Professions* there is an opportunity to understand how support is used to interrogate unhealthy practice assumptions, process work-based experiences, and engage in a continual sense of curiosity and development. By sharing the *Types and Methods of Affective Support* there is an opportunity to consider a range of support approaches. Some methods of support included may be more unfamiliar, so the description will help to support the development of a baseline understanding of how they work, and where available the

evidence base of their effectiveness has been included. Opportunities to try different support activities are key to developing offers which meet the needs of creative practitioners. The *Associated Materials* section - which brought the literature review to a close - highlighted a conference, practice handbook, research article and online resources that demonstrated the high quality work already being developed, discussed, actioned and evaluated in this research area.

The analysis and discussion of the focus group and interview contributions found common concerns, but also nuance. Four discussion themes were identified: *Impact of isolation and precarity*, *Symbiotic relationship between instrumental and affective support*, *Role of consultation and choice* and *Awareness of the barriers to accessing affective support*. These themes contribute to an understanding of the key challenges to mainstreaming affective support. *The impact of isolation and precarity* identified the ways in which working as a creative practitioner in participatory arts can be isolating and isolated. The accumulative effect of a lack of fair contracts, issued late, and subsequent late payment of invoices - together with a lack of or untimely inductions and orientations - results in an increase in workload for creative practitioners.

The *symbiotic relationship between instrumental and affective support* - separate features in the Artists Practising Well report - have now been rejoined. Attending to instrumental support - the resources and organisational structures which support the work - communicates respect and value to creative practitioners. By attending to contracts, inductions and pay in timely and fair ways, the foundations for productive work are established. It is important that the support conversation is not viewed as a single occurrence, but rather as a series of planned conversations which can take place using a range of methods and communication channels. Neglecting to attend to support structures in all its forms is an indication of re-active management and leadership styles.

The *role of consultation and choice* is a central component of this work going forward. Quality arts practice with people takes into account the needs and preferences of the participant group, and flexibility and adaptability are expected as the work develops. This responsive model of practice can be adapted to include the ways in which creative practitioners are supported. Without consultation and choice, support offers are likely to fall short of expectations, potentially leaving creative practitioners further isolated. Offering access to a range of voices and perspectives through local, regional and national connections will support individual and practice developments across the participatory arts sector. No one element of support is necessarily better than the other - it is the symbiotic relationship between the instrumental and affective, and having the opportunity to participate in a range of support initiatives designed to meet creative practitioners where they are, which will lead to a more sustainable approach to this work.

In designing support initiatives it's important to be *aware of the barriers* which may prevent attendance. I have identified these as: coping is normalised in this work and the arts sector more widely, a need to prioritise paid work and that accessing support can be seen as a sign of weakness. Research evidence shows that support is needed, but creative practitioners may not individually identify as being *in need* or *in need enough* to

take up a place or attend an event. The ways in which creative careers are often developed is through adapting, managing and self-resourcing, and therefore a *culture of coping* has evolved, which may lead to a hesitancy in accessing support. Economic necessity is also likely to affect rates of attendance, as turning down paid work to prioritise reflection activities or a peer-led session is simply not possible for a significant section of the creative practitioner workforce. By contextualising the ways in which support activities are used within other people-orientated professions the benefits can be promoted: not solely as preventing burnout but also supporting ongoing curiosity, dismantling unhelpful assumptions about practice and processing work experiences. To help with this endeavour, more research and evaluation is needed into the methods and approaches which creative practitioners find most effective. Longitudinal studies which follow a wide diversity of creative practitioners through personal change will help to provide a reliable evidence base from which to learn and develop practice further.

The literature review has provided the grounding for this research, with the focus groups and interviews providing in-depth reflections and experiences. The range of individual, organisational and sectorial perspectives has offered me ways of thinking about this research topic in expansive and new ways. There are organisations who are leading the ways in which creative practitioners are supported, to ensure this is rolled out across the whole participatory arts sector change is needed at policy level. The effects of the pandemic, the global climate crisis and the murder of George Floyd - which come on top of existing systemic inequalities - are impacting people in individual and collective ways. In order to hold the complexities and vulnerabilities of participants in participatory arts spaces, creative practitioners must be supported to protect and promote their own wellbeing. Adopting clear and consistent approaches to affective support will result in interconnected gains: sectorial learning, practice development, quality experiences for participants, increased diversification of the workforce and increased wellbeing for creative practitioners.

At the time of writing this report, the Baring Foundation have announced that they see support and supervision - including affective support - as good practice. They will be asking organisations applying to them about how they will deliver this, and pay any reasonable charge as part of their grant-making. They also add that it is important for freelance artists to be included in this, and for them to be paid for their involvement¹⁰³. This commitment contributes to the necessary culture change, from one of coping to one of thriving. By taking action now the good work which is already underway in this area can gain momentum, and collectively we can contribute to a situation where everyone has the opportunity to practice well.

¹⁰³ D. Cutler *Creatively Minded and Practising Well* 2021 Available from https://baringfoundation.org.uk/blog-post/creatively-minded-and-practising-well/?mc_cid=48b9bf9470&mc_eid=0188592e25 Accessed 18 November 2021

Recommendations

In arriving at these recommendations I first considered allocating them to different stakeholders - some aimed at creative practitioners, some directed towards organisations and funders. However, the case for affective support is best progressed if a shared understanding and collective endeavour is undertaken in the context of remembering where the resources to enable change are currently held. I have purposely described each recommendation as a verb to describe an action, for it is only through doing that change will happen.

Supporting

Instrumental support needs to be in place consistently across the participatory arts sector as a whole. Induction, introductions, fair contracts which include allocated planning, debrief and evaluation time, and prompt payment of invoices all communicate value and respect to creative practitioners, and are the foundations of any participatory arts work.

Promoting

Affective support and reflective practice activities need to be promoted as a mechanism by which to sustain professional curiosity in the participatory arts sector, and not simply as a way to avoid burnout.

Collaborating

Adopting a collaborative approach to the design, delivery and evaluation of affective support initiatives (to include creative practitioners, organisations and other stakeholders) will help to ensure frameworks of support are suitable for both creative practitioners - in their different career stages and specialisms - and organisations, in terms of management processes.

Planning

Planning processes which include creative practitioner support conversations as an integrated part of project inception, recruitment, development, delivery and evaluation - and which allow space to adapt as individual needs change and as the work dictates - will help to embed support in a sustainable way.

Learning

Engaging in a period of experimentation, experiential learning and evaluation around affective support will help stakeholders understand what works well.

Guiding

Updating grant application guidance to include specific questions about - and inviting costs related to - affective support for creative practitioners will communicate an understanding of the true cost of participatory arts work.

Evaluating

Prioritising funding to support longitudinal wellbeing studies of creative practitioners working in a range of participatory arts settings will help to build an evidence-based picture of the impact of this work on individuals and the sector.

Developing

Securing funding to establish a working group which includes diverse representation from freelance, organisational and funding perspectives, practice, research and operations to collectively develop this work in the future will help to ensure change happens and in timely ways.

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Appendix 1: Glossary

These definitions have been taken from dictionaries, reference books and research sources.

Term	Definition
Accumulative	Growing by gradual increases.
Action Learning Set	A method for individual and organisation development based on small groups of colleagues meeting over time to tackle real problems.
Affective	Relating to moods, feelings, and attitudes.
Art Therapy	Art therapy is a form of Psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication. Within this context, art is not used as a diagnostic tool but as a medium to address emotional issues which may be confusing and distressing.
Attitude	A settled way of thinking or feeling about something.
Behaviour	The way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others.
Burnout	Physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.
Care	The provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something.
Coaching	Coaching is a facilitated, dialogic and reflective learning process that aims to grow the individual's (or team's) awareness, responsibility and choice.
Cognitive Dissonance	The state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioural decisions and attitude change.
Commissioner	Person or organisation who contracts the work.
Community	A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common
Community art	The creation of art as a human right, by professional and non-professional artists, co-operating as equals, for purposes and to standards they set together, and whose processes, products and outcomes cannot be known in advance.
Compassion Fatigue	Characterised by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathise or feel compassion for others.
Counselling	Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening to and helping individuals to find ways of dealing with emotional issues.
Creative Practitioner	Someone who works in any of the creative arts, including but not limited to dance, theatre, performance, writing, and the visual arts.

Critical	Expressing or involving an analysis of the merits and faults of a work.
Dialogical	Relating to or in the form of dialogue.
Epistemology	The theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion.
Health	Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
Health and Safety	Taking sensible and proportionate measures to control the risks in the workplace.
Hegemonic	Ruling or dominant thought in a particular context.
Mentoring	Mentors provide support, direction and an objective view on how the mentee can develop and progress in their working practice.
Occupational Health	Occupational Health seeks to promote and maintain the health and well-being of employees, with the goal being to ensure a positive relationship between an employee's work and health.
Participation	The action of taking part in something.
Peer support	Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other.
People-orientated professions	Includes but is not limited to the medical professions of nursing, occupational health and medicine, social workers, probation officers and teachers.
Psychological contract	Represents the unwritten contract between employer and employee which is often based on boundaries, values and ways of working.
Psychosocial	Relating to the interrelation of social factors and individual thought and behaviour.
Reflective Practice	The development of insight and practice through critical attention to practical values, theories, principles, assumptions, and the relationship between theory and practice which inform everyday actions.
Reflexive Practice	Focused on in-depth reflection upon one's own perspectives, values and assumptions.
Risk Assessment	A careful examination of what could cause harm to people in a given activity or environment so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more.
Restorative Practice	To repair harm.
Safe	Protected from or not exposed to danger or risk; not likely to be harmed or lost.
Safeguarding	A measure taken to protect someone or something, or to prevent something undesirable.
Self Aware	Having conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings.

Self Care	The process of taking care of oneself that supports individual health and wellbeing.
Stress	A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.
Supervision - Clinical	<p>Clinical supervision provides an opportunity for staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on and review their practice. • Discuss individual cases in depth. • Change or modify their practice and identify training and continuing development needs.
Supervision - Professional	<p>Professional supervision is often interchangeable with clinical supervision. This term is sometimes used where supervision is carried out by another member of the same profession or group. This can provide staff with the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review professional standards. • Keep up to date with developments in their profession. • Identify training & continuing development needs. • Ensure that they are working within professional codes of conduct and boundaries.
Support	Give assistance to.
Synthesis	The combination of components or elements to form a connected whole.
Therapy	Treatment intended to relieve or heal a disorder.
Trauma	A deeply distressing or disturbing experience.
Vicarious Trauma (Secondary Trauma)	A process of change resulting from empathetic engagement with trauma survivors.
Wellbeing	The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.