



Executive Summary



Introduction and Methodology

Good Space is a transformative initiative, which emerged from the collaboration of Brighton Dome & Festival Limited (BDBF), Sussex Archaeological Society, Future Creators and Heads On, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's official NHS Charity. Funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), this project harnessed cultural engagement to forge pathways for individuals facing mental health challenges, particularly poignant in the wake of the global pandemic.

The overall aim of the project was to ensure:

Volunteering in arts, heritage and sports organisations is a vibrant, accessible and worthwhile experience for participants from a wider diversity of backgrounds

1. Strategic Network-building

A Working Group was established to set the strategic direction of the partnership, supported by a project manager.

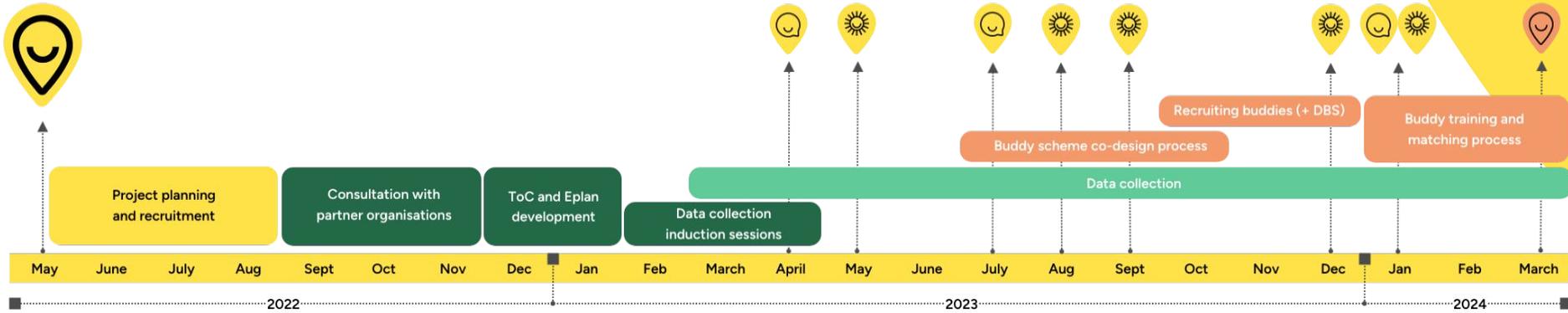
2. Training and Peer Support

Good Space worked with **16** organisations over **22** months to create a network focused on strengthening their ability to create positive opportunities for volunteers.

3. Buddy Model

Heads On co-designed and piloted a Buddy Model to integrate into NHS service users' recovery plan. The design involved engaging partner organisations, clinical practitioners and people with lived experience, to create a framework. Buddies with lived experience were then recruited, trained and matched with service users who were interested in volunteering.

Visual Timeline



KEY



Project start



Evaluation set up



Data collection



Communities of Practice (CoP)



Mental health training (MH)



Buddying scheme timeline



Volunteer with buddy placements

Volunteering in arts, heritage and sports organisations is a vibrant, accessible and worthwhile experience for participants from a wider diversity of backgrounds.



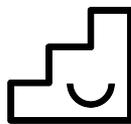
16

Partner organisations registered



4

Working Group organisations collaborating



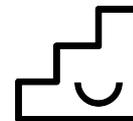
3

Communities of Practice (COP) delivered



20+

Referral Organisations engaged



5

Training sessions facilitated by Heads On



22

Digital Badges created



3

Buddies trained



17

events were attended to promote inclusive volunteering



4

volunteers in roles with Buddies



205

Digital Badges awarded



1216

Volunteers across 10 organisations

Objectives

This evaluation is a summary of the extent to which the project met its objectives by exploring the impact it had. As well as key data points, we have included some case studies of projects and partner organisations under the Good Space banner.

Objective 1:
MORE **accessible** opportunities
exist for volunteers

Evidenced through:

- How many volunteers engaged with partner organisations since they joined Good Space
- Whether new volunteers had been attracted to work in the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors
- How the website and social media brought offers together
- Whether there is evidence of spaces or opportunities being more inclusive

Objective 2:
An **INCREASE** in volunteers
from **diverse** backgrounds are
taking up opportunities

Evidenced through:

- How prepared organisations felt to support people from diverse backgrounds
- How the demographic profile of volunteers changed
- How partners were working with and learning from other organisations in the network

Objective 3:
Volunteers have a **BETTER**
experience in volunteering
roles

Evidenced through:

- In what ways are partner organisations providing better support for volunteers
- Examples of volunteers that are retained for longer and/or repeat volunteers (where appropriate)
- Whether volunteers demonstrated/ identified/ had opportunities for an increase in:
 - wellbeing/ mental health
 - skills and knowledge
 - satisfaction

Objective 1: MORE accessible opportunities exist for volunteers

Outcomes: In Summary

- **89** different volunteer roles were offered through the partner organisations
- **43%** were new to volunteering, **57%** had volunteered previously in the same or a different organisation
- **1216** volunteers engaged in volunteering opportunities across the Good Space network.
- Partners reported that making efforts to engage with potential volunteers more personally and early in the recruitment process or offering taster days made volunteering roles feel more accessible to everyone.
- The Good Space website generated 24.3k impressions, with 671 people clicking through to the website
- Through interview, 3 partner organisations reported that at least one volunteer from each organisation heard about the opportunity through the Good Space website
- **20+** referral organisations are now using the Good Space website to showcase and signpost local organisations and opportunities
- **17** events were attended to promote inclusive volunteering - these included job fairs and events run by the Department for Work & Pensions. Some were specifically aimed at people who have come out of prison, those who are disabled, those with special learning needs and those who are out of work and claiming Universal Credit.
- **3** social media platforms were utilised which allowed a capture of a wider audience
- A key benefit was encouraging partner organisations to review their recruitment processes for accessibility
- Some partners played important brokerage roles to support volunteers into roles in other organisations

Introduction

De La Warr Pavilion (DLWP), a centre for contemporary arts, has long recognised the importance of volunteers in its operations, particularly in its learning and participation team and for building tours. In a strategic shift, the De La Warr Pavilion embraced the Good Space project to focus on engaging young volunteers, transforming its approach to volunteering by emphasising mutual benefits for both the organisation and the young people involved.

Background

The Good Space project arrived at a serendipitous time for De La Warr Pavilion, aligning with its growing focus on youth involvement and work experience. This collaboration aimed to extend volunteering opportunities beyond traditional roles, engaging young people in the Arts and offering them valuable experiences for personal and professional growth.

Objectives

The project's goals were to:

- Integrate young volunteers into various facets of DLWP operations, extending to partnerships with other local arts initiatives.
- Provide young people with enriching experiences that contribute to their employability and personal development.
- Utilise volunteering as a two-way street, where the benefits extend to both the organisation and the volunteers.

Project Design and Implementation

DLWP implemented a multifaceted approach to engage young volunteers:

- Volunteer recruitment and matching: volunteers frequently found DLWP website and registered their interest in volunteering. The DLWP then acted as a broker, connecting applicants with suitable roles in DLWP and with its own partner organisations.
- Buddying: DLWP were successful in implementing the Heads On Buddy Model which paired a volunteer with a buddy to ease their integration and provide support.
- Range of opportunities: collaborations with local arts events, such as the Turner Prize, and other cultural organisations, offered diverse opportunities for volunteers to engage in.
- Feedback and adaptation: DLWP maintained an open channel for feedback from volunteers and their partner organisations, allowing for continuous improvement of the volunteer experience.

Outcomes and Impact

The partnership with Good Space significantly expanded DLWPs volunteer base, particularly among young people, and diversified the types of volunteering roles available. The initiative also facilitated important conversations about the nature of volunteering and the need for reciprocal benefits. Notably, some young volunteers transitioned into paid roles, highlighting the initiative's impact on youth employability.

Challenges and Solutions

DLWP faced challenges in aligning organisational expectations with the ethos of volunteering. Efforts were made to ensure that volunteering opportunities were genuinely beneficial for the young people involved, rather than simply filling organisational needs. This involved clear communication with partner organisations and setting expectations for what constitutes meaningful volunteer work.

De La Warr Pavilion: Empowering Youth Through Volunteering

Lessons Learned

The project underscored the importance of clear communication and setting expectations for volunteer roles. DLWP built monitoring systems to ensure the mutual benefits of volunteering, for both the organisation and the volunteers to gain from the experience. Flexibility and support were key, especially when engaging young volunteers or those with less experience.

Conclusion

DLWPs engagement with the Good Space project has transformed its approach to volunteering, particularly in how it engages and supports young people. By providing diverse and meaningful opportunities, DLWP not only enhances its own operations but also contributes significantly to the personal and professional development of young volunteers.



Objective 2: An INCREASE in volunteers from diverse backgrounds taking up opportunities

Outcomes: In Summary

- Training and conversation did much to demystify mental health and mental health conditions
- There were 44 attendances across 3 Communities of Practice on recruiting, supporting and fostering diversity in volunteer teams, following which, 83% felt prepared or very prepared to support more diverse volunteer teams
- Partners were able to apply their learning from the training to improve their volunteer offer and achieve their organisational aims
- One partner now has the highest and most diversely aged demographic of volunteers they have ever had, which they attribute to the Good Space project
- Partners also reported implementing processes to monitor the diversity and experiences of volunteers going forward
- Heads On Buddy Model resulted in three buddies supporting four volunteers with a diagnosis of psychosis into community volunteering opportunities, two of which had started by the end of this programme

Introduction

Heads On, the official NHS charity of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, champions the needs, rights and voices of people who use mental health, learning disability and neurodivergent services, supporting recovery through non-clinical routes. Sussex Partnership has a volunteering service, but opportunities tend to be inside the Trust and related to supporting its services. The partnership with Good Space was a strategic move to break down the barriers people can face to supported volunteering outside the Trust, thereby offering service users enriching opportunities to support people's continued recovery in their own communities as they explore, re-connect and embed themselves in their localities. This approach aimed to reaffirm the importance of creative and non-clinical pathways in fostering long-term recovery.

Objectives

The initiative aimed to:

- Enhance social connectivity and community integration for service users, considering these as fundamental to the recovery process
- Break down the stigma and barriers that people with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) can face to volunteering within the arts, culture, heritage and sports sectors
- Build confidence, skills, and self-efficacy, enabling individuals to pursue personal interests and passions in the community
- Utilise the therapeutic potential of arts and cultural engagement to promote mental well-being and support sustained recovery efforts.

Empowering Recovery Through Community Engagement: Heads On Buddy Model

Project Design and Implementation

The project was structured around two main components:

- **Buddy Model:** A pilot buddy model was launched to pair service users with buddies who had lived experience, providing the necessary support to access community-based opportunities. A project manager within Heads On was appointed to lead on the co-production of the model. The project manager established a steering group and a co-production group to bring together the voices of lived experience, clinicians and members of the Good Space team. Together they designed the framework of the model, the role description, agreed the safeguarding procedures and the training required. The Buddy Model was specifically aimed at working with service users with experience of psychosis, who have used NHS Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) services. The buddies are individuals who have also used EIP Services.

- **Training for partner organisations:** Heads On facilitated training sessions focused on mental health and neurodiversity awareness and support. The purpose of this training was to prepare community partners for hosting service users and to support them as they sought to diversify their volunteers and volunteering opportunities. This ensured that the volunteering environments were welcoming and supportive, catering to the specific needs of individuals with mental health challenges and psychosis diagnosis.

Outcomes and Impact

The co-production process involved close collaboration with clinical teams, Good Space partners, and individuals with lived experience to plan and foresee potential challenges for all involved, incorporating lived experience into support roles.

Empowering Recovery Through Community Engagement: Heads On Buddy Model

All co-production participants were positive about the experience, feeling like contributions were listened to, there was room for discussion and to develop ideas. Exploring the project from the angle of all the people involved enabled participants to get behind the range of benefits. The brokerage Heads On provided ensured the accessibility of opportunities and progress made since the appointment of the project manager helped demonstrate the importance of this role.

The model succeeded in recruiting five buddies with lived experience to a paid buddy role within SPFT, of which three were trained and active by the end of the project. They supported four potential volunteers, two of whom were facilitated into roles in partner organisations. Proof of concept was borne out by the number of enquiries from service users, a further eight people demonstrated an interest in volunteer opportunities but didn't require buddy support or couldn't be accommodated in the project timeframe. Initial experiences were really valuable and initial feedback of the buddies were positive.

"It was good. All very insightful and it always felt like people said and contributed a lot so there was always a lot to get on with." Expert by Experience

The training for partner organisations enabled the fostering of strong relationships with community partners and it is clear from their feedback that the training demystified terms, supported greater understanding and enhanced their preparedness.

"I love that it creates opportunities for more experienced EBE's or confident service users to participate in paid roles, as well as promotes volunteering and getting back into work / networking etc for others." Early Intervention In Psychosis staff member

“The Psychosis training felt like an excellent introduction to the topic, especially in terms of myth busting, and ... taking the 'fear of the unknown' out of it.” partner organisation

Challenges and solutions

- The Buddy Model encountered initial hurdles, due to staffing challenges and, whilst the co-design of the project was essential to the process, it necessitated coordinating busy clinical teams and volunteers. The pilot also operated alongside business as usual so, at times, competing priorities of the different organisations meant that it was difficult to move forward.
- The Heads On team felt that the community partnership had differing perspectives on the overall aims of Good Space which may have affected what opportunities were offered to potential volunteers.

- The opportunities on the Good Space website were not always current or representative of the full range of opportunities available. This was addressed both by Heads On who checked live opportunities with partner organisations and created a bulletin to circulate, and Good Space also put measures in place for all volunteer opportunities to be checked weekly. These were then updated accordingly by the Good Space team.

Lessons Learned

The pilot demonstrated that it was easier to establish worthwhile opportunities where the organisations had some experience of providing flexible opportunities for volunteers, suggesting the need for certain prerequisites to be met by partner organisations prior to matching. These include the capacity for flexibility in volunteering roles, recruitment processes and training days, as well as the ability to invest time with volunteers prior to and during induction.

Empowering Recovery Through Community Engagement: Heads On Buddy Model

One to one and face to face relationship building between Heads On and partners was crucial in strengthening the project. In particular, the relationship with De La Warr Pavilion has demonstrated what can be achieved when people work creatively and flexibly together.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges faced and time constraints resulting in limited longitudinal data, the process underpinning the pilot resulted in the development of an effective model which was seen as beneficial by the partner organisations and Heads On. The co-design workshops were instrumental in developing a shared understanding of need. In addition, the training delivered alongside the development of the Buddy Model has started a more inclusive and supportive framework for supporting volunteers with mental health difficulties in participating organisations. For future iterations of the model it would be important to ensure the expectations are clear and met by partners and that brokerage support is in place.

Once the groundwork had been achieved, ten out of the eleven partners involved in the partner audit between November 2023 and February 2024 were open to exploring how they could support volunteers with buddies into opportunities in their organisation.

"Good Space's commitment to widening access to volunteering in arts, heritage and sports sectors offered a unique opportunity to address some of the barriers people with severe mental illness can face to participating in their communities. Breaking down the stigma that still persists around mental ill health has been one of the biggest successes of the programme. By putting the voice of people with lived experience at the heart of the model, we have created something that has the potential to make a real difference to people's recovery." Heads On

Objective 3: Volunteers have a BETTER experience in volunteering roles

Outcomes: In Summary

- 55 attendances from 15 partner organisations across 5 training sessions supported them to understand specific mental health needs
- 35 supporting resources were uploaded on the website, to back up the training
- 100% of partner organisations who attended the Mental Health Awareness training reported increased understanding and confidence around managing mental health with volunteers and staff. 100% reported they felt better prepared, 80% would recommend the Mental Health Awareness training
- Training was most useful when partner organisations were supported to apply it to their own settings. Feedback from partner organisations identified a range of adjustments they had made to the way they delivered volunteering opportunities to make them more accessible, as a result of Good Space
- 22 new Digital Badges were created and 205 awarded to recognise skills, knowledge and experience gained by partner organisations and volunteers by four existing Digital Badge providers and six organisations new to Digital Badging

Introduction

Worthing Theatres and Museum (WTM), on transitioning to a charitable trust five years prior, faced new operational challenges. Volunteers became crucial, undertaking roles critical to the organisation's functioning. This heightened the significance of their volunteer programme, especially for live events, where volunteers became indispensable for both customer service and safety.

Objective

The primary objective for WTM's involvement with Good Space was to enhance their volunteer programme, ensuring operational efficiency, embracing a more diverse volunteer base, enriching the volunteering experience and broadening community involvement.

Project Design and Implementation

The introduction of a more inclusive induction process, accommodating diverse needs, such as providing interpreters for hearing-impaired volunteers, marked a significant improvement in volunteer engagement.

This approach was particularly effective during the pantomime season, the organisation's busiest time, where recruitment focused on integrating new volunteers into the organisation.

Challenges

The volunteers have certain limitations around their roles. For example, those volunteers who work in the museum need to have curatorial experience, unless in front of house roles. Volunteers also do not participate in any financial handling tasks. WTM were interested in attracting younger people to volunteer which they were so successful in achieving during Good Space for their customer experience roles. This has removed the need for further volunteer recruitment to this role as part of Good Space (or externally) moving forward.

Outcomes and Impact

Engagement with the Good Space project led to a noticeable transformation in the volunteer programme, particularly in diversifying the volunteer base. This included attracting younger volunteers and those with additional needs, significantly enhancing the community's vibrancy and inclusivity. Partnerships with local organisations, like the Sand Project,

played a crucial role in this transformation, offering a pathway for more inclusive volunteer opportunities and, in some cases, transitioning volunteers to paid positions within WTM.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The collaboration with the Good Space project was a catalyst for change within the WTM volunteer programme. Plans for future enhancements include a points-based reward system to further acknowledge and appreciate volunteer contributions. Additionally, there's a recognition of the need for more tailored support from initiatives like Good Space, particularly in managing challenging volunteer situations, highlighting an area for potential development in volunteer management practices.

Conclusions

As evidenced in this executive summary, and the full report, Good Space achieved a great deal of impact in a short space of time. Not least a firm commitment from a wide range of partner organisations who strongly believe in what Good Space stands for.

It is evident from the different case studies and range of partnerships that this project was multi-faceted. At times this presented challenges between different elements of delivery.

However, there is huge potential for the network to strengthen volunteering opportunities and accessibility across the region. The commitment to continuous learning from the working group has resulted in a wealth of knowledge and experience that can be used to shape future programmes of this kind.

