



# The Gathering Project 2021 Evaluation Report

May 2021 - March 2022

*'The Gathering Project has given me better insight and ideas for moving forward with how to manage and enrich my life and overcome struggles'. - **Project participant***

*'I really enjoyed the workshops, [they] helped me come out of my shell'. - **Project participant***

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## Executive Summary

*The Gathering Project* is a creative community programme designed to respond to societal challenges arising from Covid-19. It aims to bring communities back together through theatre to promote community cohesion, resilience, positive health and wellbeing.

The need for the project was highlighted in several charity annual reports from 2020/2021. The charity, Mind, stated that *'The coronavirus pandemic left a deep scar on the mental health of millions of people across England and Wales. The terrible loss of life, impact of lockdown and unprecedented isolation left so many of us struggling to cope'*.

Recruitment for the project was lower than expected but the project took place in six different community spaces across Hampshire between May 2021 - March 2022 and worked with 149 people. The project ran over four practical, two hour, theatre based sessions, all Covid-19 safe and delivered by specialist arts practitioners. Each workshop focused on a specific topic; Isolation, Loss, Coping and Emergence that gave people an opportunity to build back confidence, develop individual resilience and feel connected to their community again.

*The Gathering Project* had a positive impact on the majority of the participants taking part and levels of wellbeing amongst the participants have risen as a result. We know that the project has given many adults the opportunity to stop, reflect and process their thoughts and feelings in relation to their experiences of Covid-19 and the project has had an important role in supporting their wellbeing during a challenging time. Data shows that after the projects had taken place only 1 in 13 adults showed levels of low wellbeing, compared to 1 in 2 before the project started. One adult said *'I needed to do this because I thought that there was nothing left to help me anymore. I have done this today and even though it feels scary at times and theatre isn't my thing at all, I am able to see some sort of clear path through the mist.'*

*The Gathering Project* was one of two projects Fluid Motion had delivered since the Covid-19 Pandemic closed everything down therefore there were many challenges and a lot of learning that took place over the course of delivery. This included the need to form stronger partnerships to better support the recruitment of participants, to consider the types of locations and spaces suitable for sessions and developing clearer project information particularly with non-threatening, accessible language.

This learning has identified several opportunities for the development of the project over the next few years to ensure its continued success which includes a dedicated 'Community Producer' who oversees the project and extending the amount of sessions to ensure 'clinical relevance'.

## 2. About the project

*The Gathering Project* was specifically designed by Fluid Motion Theatre Company to respond to societal challenges arising from Covid-19. It aimed to bring communities back together through theatre to promote community cohesion, resilience, positive health and wellbeing. It was part of a wider programme of activities created under Year 1 of Fluid Motion's new three year programme plan (2021 - 2023) which was themed around *Resilience*.

*The Gathering Project* gives adults (18+) an opportunity to build back confidence, develop individual resilience and feel connected to their community again. Participants learnt how to make healthier life choices and to reduce harmful behaviours, as well as learning about accessing local services and support.

The project ran over four practical, two hour, theatre based sessions, all Covid-19 safe and delivered by specialist youth arts practitioners. Each workshop focused on a specific topic which in 2021 were 'Isolation', 'Loss', 'Coping' and 'Emergence'.

We then invited all groups to take part in a fifth session, facilitated by the project co-ordinator, which was aimed at encouraging participants to celebrate achievement and to get them to think about how they would like to share what they had gained or learnt with their peers. The group chose to design some positive affirmation messages, short quotes that we then turned into a sheet of fridge magnets based on their designs. These magnets were given out to each participant and could then be stuck on the fridge at home to act as a positive reminder of all they achieved.

## 3. The Need

The Charity, Mental Health UK stated in their annual report for 2020/2021 that '*8.5 million more adults experienc[ed] poor mental health as a result of the pandemic*'. In Mind's annual report for the same year they explained that '*in that early, chaotic period, many people were unable to access support while others chose to stay away from GP surgeries and hospitals. Our own research also found that lots of people felt their mental health problems were not important enough to deserve help.*' It was evident that there was a clear need for *The Gathering Project* and that it could provide some early intervention support for participants who would like to address their mental health needs in a less clinical way. The project was a timely, focused, well researched and professionally delivered intervention that could act as a proactive step rather than a reactive step in supporting adults' mental health.

## 4. Aims & Objectives

- To improve adults' physical and mental wellbeing, providing positive coping mechanisms that may have been lost during lockdown and that have suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic
- To better equip adults to process their feelings, anxieties and actions, so that they can start to rebuild, recover and thrive again
- To provide a safe space where adults can reflect on Covid-19 and the lockdown periods to support their recovery
- To allow adults to better understand how theatre and other creative activities can be a positive outlet for them and act as a tool to help support their ongoing wellbeing.

## 5. Who took part

*The Gathering Project* was publicised as an opportunity for any adult to take part in. This meant that all of the participants would be aged 18+. We worked with either pre-established community groups or groups that had been specifically created for the project.

Fluid Motion worked with a total of 149 adults over the length of the project which began in May 2021 and finished in March 2022 and was held at six different community locations across Hampshire, they were:

- 19 adults at Andover Mind Wellbeing Centre, Basingstoke, Hampshire.
- 27 adults at Gosport Voluntary Action, Gosport Hampshire.
- 8 adults at The Point, Eastleigh, Hampshire.
- 42 adults at the United Reformed Church, Hythe, New Forest.
- 20 adults at the Countryside Educational Trust, Beaulieu, New Forest.
- 33 adults at St. Peter's Church, Basingstoke, Hampshire.

## 6. Collecting Evidence

Fluid Motion's three year programme plan includes new methods of evaluation which are aimed at making a stronger, more robust and detailed case for the need for our work and the impact it has on the people and communities who take part. *The Gathering Project* was one of the first projects to embed these new methods.

Each participant was required to complete the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale at the beginning of session one. This method of evaluation allowed us to gather important baseline data on the general wellbeing of the group. The participants were then asked to complete the scale again during the last session. This data was hugely important as it provided Fluid Motion with clear statistics on the impact on wellbeing the project has had. In addition it provided the wellbeing

services, community organisations and local health and social care teams, extra data on the wellbeing of their service users.

The practitioner kept a reflective journal which they wrote in after each session. The journal was a useful way of tracking what was working well and what wasn't and was used to record and note down the thoughts, reflections and creative ideas that the participants expressed and that might otherwise be missed.

Participants were also asked to complete a written feedback questionnaire at the end of the fourth session. This captures general thoughts about the project, levels of satisfaction, ideas and suggestions for the future.

Local film company Millstream Productions was commissioned to create a short documentary of the project that included interviews with participants. This powerful and moving video can be found here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_hNxOyUTk8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_hNxOyUTk8)

Lastly, we held a celebratory session on Zoom, inviting all the participants from across all six locations as well as partners and funders. This was an opportunity to reflect on *The Gathering Project* and to think about the future plans for the project in 2022.

## **7. What happened and how it went**

### **7.1 Recruitment**

Recruitment for *The Gathering Project* took place between November and December 2019. This was initially led by the Artistic Director and then taken over by the Project Co-ordinator.

The target audience for the project was any adult aged 18+ with mild to moderate mental health problems and, due to the Covid-19 situation, anyone who felt that they were struggling with their mental health as a result of the pandemic. The project was part funded by Hampshire County Council and part of this agreement was a commitment to providing staff support through their mental health teams who would refer service users to the project in each of the various areas. Fluid Motion also partnered with local mental health charities and organisations who the company felt could best support the recruitment and referral process. These included, Solent Mind and Andover Mind, Forest Forge Theatre, The Point and The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre and local libraries.

Promoting the project to potential participants was done in several ways. We created subtitled project information films that were posted on our website and social media. These were created to give an overview of the project and what happens in each section so that individuals can make a more informed choice about whether it is for

them or not. It also helped to break down some of the barriers around what taking part in a theatre project meant. We designed a series of posters to be distributed either digitally or in person that were sent to all community partners so that they could distribute them to their colleagues or service users. The Project Co-ordinator also attended several online drop-in sessions to talk about the project and answer any questions. On reflection this was not enough.

Fluid Motion's initial plan was to work with 10 different community groups across Hampshire, These were:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Recruitment Method</b>
Gosport	Search Museum - Gosport Town Centre	Pre- existing group. Gosport Voluntary Action Group.
Gosport	Bridgemary Library	Working in partnership with Abri to help signpost groups from Radian/Abri residents. Recruitment support from Roma Williams (Bridgemary Library)Participants sign up through FM website.
Basingstoke	South Ham	Referrals from HCC in partnership with Westside. Participants sign up through the FM website.
Basingstoke	Andover Mind Wellbeing Centre	Wellbeing centre to lead on recruitment to their pre-existing service users
New Forest	Countryside Education Trust	Working in partnership with Solent Mind - To lead on recruitment to their pre-existing service users
New Forest (ringwood)	Forest Forge	Referrals from HCC in partnership with Forest Forge who may have participants/audiences keen on coming along. Participants sign up through FM website
Rushmoor - Farnborough	Wellbeing Centre (The Clockhouse)	Wellbeing centre to lead on recruitment to their pre-existing service users
Hart - Fleet	Fleet Library	Referrals from HCC
Eastleigh	The Point	Working in partnership with Solent Mind - To lead on recruitment to their pre-existing service users
Havant	The Spring	Working in partnership with Sophie at The Spring to target participants/audiences keen on coming along

Out of the 10 listed community groups and locations above, Fluid Motion was only able to work with 4 of them, Search Museum in Gosport, Andover Mind Wellbeing Centre in Basingstoke, the Countryside Education Trust in the New Forest and The Point in Eastleigh. The other 6 groups never took place because no one had signed



up for the sessions. There are several factors to consider as to why this happened and each location has slightly different reasons. The Spring in Havant and Forest Forge in the New Forest are both arts centres and we assumed that they would have a captive, adult audience base used to workshops taking place and would be therefore keen on giving our project a go, however venues had just opened back up again which meant that the venues were finding it hard to re-engage people and we were also making a group from scratch. This was similar for Bridgemary and Fleet Libraries, whilst they are a community space, the capacity for the library to drive recruitment is low and people weren't actively looking for groups to join at that time. Libraries are also not well known spaces for accessing mental health support and therefore these locations would be unfamiliar to potential participants. Another major factor we need to consider is that there was an assumption from us that we could leave the community partner or venue to get on with it and get us people to work with, this was naive and a much more supportive and proactive approach is needed in future. We can't simply send out a poster and do a social media post and feel we have done enough.

Another important factor was that some of the sessions were scheduled to start quite soon after Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted and there was still a clear hesitation from a lot of people about getting back together again with a group in an indoor space. Furthermore, because of restrictions, community organisations and partners were just setting up things again after a long period of no engagement so they still had limited communication with their service users, meaning that they were not able to talk face to face with them and explain about the project.

The project was most successful when run with a pre-established community group or with a proactive community leader who knew their service users well and was able to communicate with them personally, either by phone or email. After learning this the Project Co-ordinator was able to recruit two further pre-established community groups to work with, these were the Women's Wellbeing Group in Hythe and the Artwell Group in Basingstoke. This meant we successfully delivered six groups in total.

## **7.2 Delivery**

*The Gathering Project* is split into four separate sessions, each one has a specific theme. The session plans were devised by the Artistic Director and the Project Co-ordinator and followed a clear structure of 'Warm Up', 'Main Tasks' and 'Cool Down'. Each workshop has specific creative tasks that are themed around the topic for that session and each one is designed to follow on from the next, developing the participants' trust and confidence as well as building resilience.

Below is an overview of each workshop plan that was written up and sent to the community groups in advance of their first workshop, as well as being made

available on our website. We did this so that participants and partners had all the information up front so everyone knew what was involved and expected.

### **Session 1- Isolation**

Participants will be given an introduction to *The Gathering Project* and the practitioner will talk through their expectations and answer any questions they may have. They will be introduced to our wellbeing spectrum and asked where they feel they sit on a scale of 1 - 5 in order to give them a moment to check in with themselves and the group as a whole. The participants will take part in a series of physical warm up exercises and games in order to continue building trust and develop group cohesion. The participants will then explore the topic of Isolation and will talk about what they feel they have been isolated from, how it feels and what it means. They will then come up with their own group definition. They will be led through a series of exercises, both as a group and in pairs, that gives them the opportunity to express their experiences of isolation, including putting physical actions to their feelings and emotions.

Furthermore the group will be given a cardboard cube to construct. This is their 'positivity cube' and will be with them during every session. The cube is designed as a space where they can write any reflections and positive thoughts that they have as they take part in all four workshops on this project. The participants will then spend some time putting their cube together and on one side, mark with a drawing or image that reflects them as a way to identify it at each session.

The workshop will finish with a reflection and cool down period which includes a moment for the participants to discuss their thoughts and ideas of the session. They will also do a couple of basic mindfulness exercises which includes a short breathing exercise.

### **Session 2: Loss**

Participants will be welcomed back to the project and asked to think about how they are feeling using the wellbeing spectrum. The participants will take part in a series of physical warm up exercises and games in order to continue building trust and develop group cohesion.

The participants will then explore the topic of Loss and will talk about what they feel they have lost over that past twelve months. They will then come up with their own group definition.

They will take part in an image task. The participants will be asked to select one image from a collection that the practitioner has brought along, which best reflects their own sense of loss in relation to the last 12 months. Participants will then be asked to share with each other why they have selected that image.

In addition, the group will then be asked to imagine that they are an artist and are creating a new piece of work all about Loss. thinking about the colours they need, the tools and the materials. The group will then be asked to share, if comfortable, what they have created.

The last part of the session will be focused on discussing how people can deal with loss. What are the strategies, techniques, and support services that can be used to help if people are struggling. Asking the group to think about a scenario in which they were going to be given the task of designing a self help pack, what advice/tools would they give? And then imagining that the NHS wants to adopt this list of tools as a model of best practice for national rollout. The group needs to come up with a pitch that can be presented to the NHS.

The workshop will finish with a reflection and cool down period which includes a moment for the participants to discuss their thoughts and ideas of the session. They will also do a couple of basic mindfulness exercises which includes a short breathing exercise.

### **Session 3 - Coping**

The participants will be welcomed back to the project and asked to think about how they are feeling using the wellbeing spectrum. The participants will take part in a series of physical warm up exercises and games in order to energise and focus the group.

The participants will then explore the topic of Coping and will be told that these last two sessions are all about building resilience, confidence and focusing more specifically on giving them coping strategies and skills that they can use themselves to feel better and happier. They will then come up with their own group definition.

They will take part in a group exercise that gets them to think about what they did to keep themselves active and mentally well during lockdown and will summarise that using theatre techniques. They will also do a group movement exercise that explores the idea of good mental health.

The last half of the session will introduce mindfulness techniques and give the participants the chance to come up with their own mindful mantra to call upon whenever they might need it to feel better. The group will also be asked to write a short story in which a character they come up with has had to use a coping strategy to overcome a challenge.

The workshop will finish with a reflection and cool down period which includes a moment for the participants to discuss their thoughts and ideas of the session. They

will also do a couple of basic mindfulness exercises which includes a short breathing exercise.

#### **Session 4 - Emergence**

The participants will be welcomed back to the project and asked to think about how they are feeling using the wellbeing spectrum. The participants will be told that this is the last session so they are going to be looking ahead, celebrating achievements and looking to the future. The participants will take part in a series of physical warm up exercises and games in order to energise and focus the group.

The participants will then explore the topic of Emergence and will then come up with their own group ambition, something they all collectively want to achieve in the future. The group will then be asked to create their own personal mindfulness exercise with a partner, understanding how to get the right balance in life.

They will then have a chance to celebrate all of their achievements in the project in a task called 'Positive Party' which is a group improvisation exercise designed to showcase the strengths and skills of every single participant in the group. The last part of the session includes some time to fill in project feedback and evaluation sheets.

The workshop will finish with a reflection and cool down period which includes a moment for the participants to discuss their thoughts and ideas of the session. They will also do a couple of basic mindfulness exercises which includes a short breathing exercise. The participants will be thanked for their engagement and involvement in the whole project.

### **7.3 The project at individual locations**

It is important to summarise how the project ran in each location because each experience was different and offered several ways to learn and develop the project for the future.

#### **7.3.1 Andover Mind - Basingstoke**

The group was made up of service users from the wellbeing centre and there was a proactive team based there who drove recruitment and interest for us. The space allocated for the sessions was very small and so this was difficult at times to deliver the more physical and creative tasks however the group always seemed comfortable in joining in all the warm up games and theatre exercises. Of the 19 that signed up there were only 4 regular participants so at times it was a challenge for the practitioner to keep the energy levels and momentum going.

The participants were very open in all of the sessions about talking about how they had suffered with their mental health prior to the pandemic and how it was

exacerbated by it. This was probably due to the fact that they were already comfortable in doing so because of the ongoing support from the wellbeing centre and their participation in other groups that they run.

### **7.3.2 The Point - Eastleigh**

The group was made up of service users from Solent Mind (Eastleigh) who we had partnered with for this group. We felt it would've been better to run the sessions in a Solent Mind Wellbeing Centre (like in Basingstoke) but this was not possible. We had a representative from Solent Mind present which was useful. The Point originally offered their outdoor decking as space to hold the sessions, however due to the changeable weather and the logistics surrounding resources for each session the decision was made to move inside to one of their upstairs meeting rooms. The first session had 3 people in attendance and the second session had new participants join so the practitioner felt that it was best to repeat the first session. Unfortunately, no one returned for sessions 3 and 4 and so these were cancelled. The representative from Solent Mind explained the main reasons for lack of attendance was due to participants being unable to afford the travel to Eastleigh, certain individuals testing positive for Covid and other personal issues that took priority.

### **7.3.3 Countryside Education Trust - Beaulieu**

The sessions took place in one of the treehouses at the The Countryside Education Trust in Beaulieu. We wanted to test the project in different spaces, including those with a nature/outdoor focus to see if that enhanced the project impact in any way. The group was made up of service users from Solent Mind (New Forest) who had signed up for the sessions through the New Forest Wellbeing Centre. We had a regular 5 or 6 participants who turned up to every session. One participant shared that they '*looked forward to the sessions as it provided some structure to their day*'. The group did not all know each other but seemed to be happy to share and discuss with others their thoughts and feelings. The space was a large room which meant the practitioner could move the group around and provide designated areas for discussions (with chairs and tables), warm up games and physical creativity.

### **7.3.4 Gosport Voluntary Action - Gosport**

The sessions took place at the Gosport Search Museum. The group was pre-existing and was made up of participants from Gosport Voluntary Action that already meet weekly as part of a volunteering group. This group displayed obvious varying degrees of poor mental health as well as additional learning needs and so the practitioner was mindful that not everyone would be able to fully participate in every activity. Also as a consequence participants would often arrive 20 or 30 minutes late for the session meaning that the practitioner would have to stop or repeat activities in order for the participants to be caught up on what was happening.

The space was a large room which meant the practitioner could move the group around, which was positive as they seemed to enjoy the more physical activities. As

the group was already pre-established, it meant that on the whole the group were comfortable with sharing their thoughts because they all knew each other. Whilst this was a hugely positive outcome and sharing was always encouraged, at times discussions and conversations did overrun and the practitioner often found it hard to keep the group on track and consequently they did not get to participate in all of the tasks and activities because time had run out.

### **A note on the last two groups**

It is important to note that the following two groups took part in *The Gathering Project* in the spring of 2022. Although restrictions had been significantly reduced, it was clear that communities were still dealing with the effects and aftermath of the lockdowns and an uncertainty on how to approach returning back to 'normal life'.

#### **7.3.5 Women's Wellbeing Group - Hythe**

The sessions took place at Cornerstone United Reformed Church in Hythe and made up of a pre-existing group of participants from the Women's wellbeing group that meets weekly and is run by Families Matter. The room that was allocated for the sessions was a meeting room and so the chairs and tables took up the majority of the space, leaving very little room for the participants to move. The group were very open from the beginning and always interested in the types of warm up games and creative tasks that they would be taking part in.

#### **7.3.6 Artwell Group - Basingstoke**

The sessions took place at St.Peter's Church Hall in Basingstoke. The group was pre-existing and made up of participants from the Artwell Group that met weekly to take part in art activities to support their mental health. However, what did become clear is that new participants had joined recently and therefore people did not know each other that well. The space was a large room which meant the practitioner could move the group around and provide designated areas in the room for discussions (with chairs and tables), warm up games and physical creativity. Consequently the sessions supported the group getting to know each other better. The group was comfortable and used to talking about their mental health through an arts practice, however, what was new for them was using theatre and movement to express themselves. The majority of the group enjoyed the warm up games, as one participant explained that the ice break games '*helped to make new friends*'. However, another participant said they '*didn't care for the clapping game. I felt left out (rejected) when it wasn't my turn and some people seemed to dominate the exercise*'.

## 8. The Impact

*The Gathering Project* had a positive impact on the majority of participants taking part and levels of wellbeing amongst participants have risen as a result. We know that the project has given many members the opportunity to stop, reflect and process their thoughts and feelings in relation to their experiences of Covid-19 and the project has had an important role in providing initial or further support to participants who were already dealing with poor mental health. This was highlighted in several feedback forms from the community groups, one participant from the Gosport Voluntary Action group said that '*it freed myself of pain and the activities were very positive.*' Another participant from the Andover Mind group explained that '*I feel more positive going into the future now*'.

Fluid Motion has measured the project impact in several ways, these methodologies are based on Public Health England's framework for evaluating arts and health projects and each one is presented below:

### 8.1 Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale Data

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS) were developed to enable the measuring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The 14-item scale has 5 response categories, summed up to provide a single score.

Every participant was asked to complete this scale two weeks before the first session and then on the last session itself. Data collected has shown that on average after the project had taken place only 1 in 13 adults showed levels of low wellbeing, compared to 1 in 2 before the project started showing that our intervention had a significant positive increase on participants' wellbeing.

Highlights of the WEMWBS data by community group is as follows:

#### 8.1.1 Andover Mind - Basingstoke

- Before the project 71% of participants reported low wellbeing compared to 0% after the project had finished
- Before the project 29% of participants reported medium wellbeing compared to 100% after the project had finished
- Before the project 0% of participants reported high wellbeing compared to 0% after the project had finished

#### 8.1.2 The Point - Eastleigh

- Before the project 60% of participants reported low wellbeing compared to 0% after the project had finished

- Before the project 40% of participants reported medium wellbeing compared to 75% after the project had finished
- Before the project 0% of participants reported high wellbeing compared to 25% after the project had finished

### **8.1.3 Countryside Education Trust - Beaulieu**

- Before the project 38% of participants reported low wellbeing compared to 0% after the project had finished
- Before the project 50% of participants reported medium wellbeing compared to 75% after the project had finished
- Before the project 12% of participants reported high wellbeing compared to 25% after the project had finished

### **8.1.4 Gosport Voluntary Action**

- Before the project 38% of participants reported low wellbeing compared to 0% after the project had finished
- Before the project 50% of participants reported medium wellbeing compared to 75% after the project had finished
- Before the project 12% of participants reported high wellbeing compared to 25% after the project had finished

### **8.1.5 Women's Wellbeing Group - Hythe**

- Before the project 50% of participants reported low wellbeing compared to 30% after the project had finished
- Before the project 50% of participants reported medium wellbeing compared to 50% after the project had finished
- Before the project 0% of participants reported high wellbeing compared to 20% after the project had finished

### **8.1.6 Artwell Group - Basingstoke**

- Before the project 50% of participants reported low wellbeing compared to 13% after the project had finished
- Before the project 50% of participants reported medium wellbeing compared to 88% after the project had finished
- Before the project 0% of participants reported high wellbeing compared to 0% after the project had finished

## **8.2 Feedback Forms**

Each participant was asked to complete a short project evaluation form at the end of the last session. The form asked several questions about quality of delivery, enjoyment and satisfaction, impact on wellbeing and suggestions for the future.



- 71% of participants rated their enjoyment of the project as the highest score '5'
- 97% of participants said that the project has had a positive impact on their mental health (scoring 3 or above in a scale where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'very much so')
- 94% of participants said they feel less isolated because of taking part in the project (scoring 3 or above in a scale where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'very much so')
- 73% of participants said they feel more connected to their community rating their experience either 4 or 5.

### **8.3 Zoom Event**

The Project Co-ordinator organised an online Zoom event towards the end of the project where everyone could come to celebrate and reflect on the project. We invited all partners, funders and participants of the project. It was a chance for the participants to share their experiences of taking part with each other, for us to listen and understand what worked and what didn't and allow everyone to feel a sense of empowerment and ownership of the project for the future. Some participants expressed a feeling of having reservations about taking part in the sessions as they were run by a theatre company, and so they had expectations of being asked to stand up in a space and 'perform'. However they also explained that once they began the sessions they all enjoyed the creative tasks and were therefore happy to share their thoughts and creative moments to the rest of the group. The Zoom event was also a chance for Fluid Motion to premiere the short documentary film that we had made and for everyone to discuss what format *The Gathering Project* might take in 2022.

### **8.4 Project Documentary Film**

Fluid Motion commissioned production company Millstream Productions to create a short project documentary film which can be viewed here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_hNxOyUTk8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_hNxOyUTk8)

## **9. What we have learnt**

This whole report, and Section 8 specifically, clearly articulates the impact that *The Gathering Project* has had on the participants and communities who took part. The project was a success and professionally managed, however it was the first year that Fluid Motion had delivered it and it was one of the first projects it had run since the Covid-19 Pandemic had closed everything down. Therefore there was a lot of learning that took place over the course of delivery and those points are summarised below:

- That adult's mental health across Hampshire has been and still is severely affected as a result of Covid-19
- The project works best with pre-established groups
- That we mustn't always assume partners understand their level of responsibility and support when it comes to recruitment for the sessions
- That top up mental health training for project staff should be conducted before a new yearly project takes place
- Although the project delivery ran into the beginning of 2022, there was still a clear need for this type of project
- The need to continually be empathetic and mindful to the level of ask from the participants. One participant from the Gosport Voluntary Action group expressed that '*the need for imagination and to answer such big probing questions made it seem demanding.*'

## 10. What we will do differently next time

We have identified several opportunities for the development of the project over the next year and beyond. They are:

- Project information needs to be clear, concise and accessible language needs to be used when communicating with people who have not engaged with theatre before. For example referring to sessions rather than workshops. Ensuring that the emphasis of the project is on the process rather than the outcome
- The type of space the sessions are delivered in are suitable
- Create a new 'Community Producer' role within Fluid Motion whose job it would be to nurture new and develop existing partner relationships in order for them to understand their responsibility within the project
- To acknowledge and be prepared that we can't guarantee that the same participants will attend every session and that detailed data may not be able to be collected from everyone
- There is the opportunity to increase the number of workshops from four to five for every community group, particularly as one participant from the Countryside Education Trust group said, they '*would like it to be longer, allowing more time to settle in*'. The content of the fifth workshop would be available to every group and would include designing a self care pack that would inspire the participants to take charge of their own health and wellbeing and help to design a resource, using the knowledge they have gained, that can benefit not only the participants taking part but the wider community
- Ensure all project staff have top up youth mental health training as well as bereavement training immediately before going into community groups
- To look at providing travel or bursaries for participants who wanted to attend but could not because of geographical or financial barriers

- Ensuring all locations for the sessions are familiar and feel accessible to potential participants
- To maintain the connections with each community group and partner for Gathering Project 2022. Further, there is the opportunity for previous participants to take on the role of community ambassadors of the project.