The Value of Cultural and Creative Engagement: Understanding the Experiences and Opinions of Care-experienced Young People and Foster Carers in Wales

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1. Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Confidence in Care is a five-year funded programme by The Big Lottery. Led by The Fostering Network Wales, the programme will be delivered in partnership with Action for Children, Barnardo's and The Adolescent and Children's Trust. The programme will be independently evaluated by The Children's Social Research and Development Centre at Cardiff University (CASCADE) and will work closely with Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru and Children in Wales. A strand of this programme aims to provide an engaging and fun experience for foster children that improves their confidence, develops friendships, self-achievement and trust, and involves their siblings and families in this process.

In relation to this wider project, the Wales Millennium Centre ran an arts-based programme which was funded and supported by the Confidence in Care Consortium led by The Fostering Network in Wales. The arts-based programme was delivered between May and July 2018 and involved eight care-experienced[1] young people and their foster families. The Wales Millennium Centre commissioned Cardiff University to conduct research with care-experienced young people and their foster carers, and facilitators involved with the delivery of the arts project. The research explored the views of facilitators, young people, and their carers about their experiences of being involved, the possible value and benefits of being engaged with the arts, and the potential barriers to participation with the arts and culture.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the research

The research aimed to assess the current knowledge base regarding care-experienced children's and young people's engagement with the arts, and to

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[1] One of the young people involved was the biological child of one of the foster carers. The invitation to attend was extended to this young person in relation to the Confidence in Care programme's remit to involve siblings and families.

explore the views of facilitators, young people, and their carers involved in the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre.

Objective 1: Collate and report relevant data and literature.

Objective 2: Conduct an in-depth qualitative research study with programme facilitators, care-experienced young people, and their foster families to provide insight into their experience of being involved with the arts-based programme, and their opinions on what could be done to improve the model and encourage engagement with the arts more widely.

The research study was guided by the following central research questions:

1. What is the current knowledge base around arts-based engagement and care-experienced children and young people?
2. How do foster carers nurture creativity in young people?
3. What cultural forms are valued by care-experienced young people and foster carers and how do they conceptualise value?
4. What enables care-experienced young people to take part in arts-based activities?
5. What are the challenges and issues for foster carers in accessing and sustaining relationships with the arts and cultural education?
6. What changes can arts-based organisations make to encourage and sustain relationships with care-experienced young people and their foster families?

To meet these objectives our research followed a two-phase design. In phase one, to provide a background to the study we collated literature on what is known about the inequalities faced by care-experienced children and young people. We also reviewed literature charting the impact of the arts and culture on communities. Additionally, we conducted a rapid review of arts interventions with care-experienced children and young people. Attending to research question one, this review provided information on the current knowledge base around arts and cultural engagement programmes with care-experienced children and young people.

In phase two, we conducted an in-depth qualitative research study which involved observations of the arts-based sessions at the Wales Millennium Centre and interviews with programme facilitators, care-experienced young people, and their foster families. This sought to address research questions two to six.

1.3 The report

Chapters Two and Three offer the reader some contextualisation to the study. Chapter Two outlines key messages from the academic literature about the educational and life-course experiences of care-experienced children and young people in Wales. Chapter Three examines literature that argues for the importance of arts and culture for individuals, communities and care-experienced children and young people.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology selected for this research. It provides a full explanation of the approach adopted in the rapid review of arts interventions with care-experienced children and young people. This chapter also presents a description and explanation of the methods and activities applied in the qualitative research undertaken with programme facilitators, young people, and their foster families.

Chapter Five provides details of the findings from phase one in relation to the rapid review of arts interventions with care-experienced children and young people. Chapter Six presents the findings from phase two, focusing on the qualitative research with programme facilitators, young people, and their foster families.

Chapter Seven offers some conclusions to the report by setting out the key findings in relation to the project objectives and research questions. It outlines some recommendations from the study in terms of practice for engaging and working with care-experienced young people in Wales and proposes avenues for future research.

2. Literature Review - Care-experienced Children and Young People

2.1 Introduction

This research study focussed on an arts programme for care-experienced young people and fosters carers in Wales. Accordingly, it is important to provide some contextualisation for the reader in relation to the numbers of care-experienced children and their educational and life-course outcomes. The chapter outlines a range of documented outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in the key areas of education, employment, contact with the criminal justice system, early parenthood, mental health problems and homelessness.

2.2 Prevalence of children and young people experiencing care in England and Wales

Elliott's (2019) quantitative study compared the number of children in care in Wales and England over time. It found that, between 2003 and 2014, the number of children experiencing care in Wales increased. In 2015, nearly 70,000 children and young people were in either foster or residential care in England (Gibson and Edwards 2015), with 5,616 children in care in Wales (Mannay et al. 2015). The latest figures for the number of children in care in Wales and England are 5,955 (Stats Wales 2017) and 72, 670 (Department for Education 2017), respectively. Drakeford (2012) has argued that children in Wales are one-and-a-half-times more likely to reside in care compared to those in England. These increases have a significant impact on services, and the quality of care and education for children and young people in Wales.

2.3 Educational outcomes of care-experienced children and young people in Wales

Across Wales, the UK and globally, children and young people who have experienced care generally achieve poorer educational outcomes compared to those who have not (Jackson and Cameron 2014; Mannay et al. 2015, 2017a; O'Higgins et al. 2015; Sebba et al. 2015), with this discordancy in attainment attracting international concern (Berridge 2012; Jackson and Höjer 2013). Previous research theorises that care-experienced children and young people face significant educational disadvantages due to the adverse impacts of abuse and trauma on their abilities to succeed academically (St Claire and Osborn 1987; Sinclair and Gibbs 1998; Bombèr 2007; O'Sullivan and Westerman 2007). Other barriers to educational attainment in these groups include unstable and disruptive environments, time spent out of school, poor additional educational support and a lack of understanding of their specific mental and emotional health needs (Heath et al. 1994; Social Exclusion Unit 2003; Harker et al. 2004), as well as, generally, the low socio-economic status of care-experienced children and young people's birth families (Berridge 2007; Forrester et al. 2009; Rees and Holding 2014).

The educational disadvantages facing care-experienced children and young people in Wales follow life-course trajectories from foundation stage, to key stages in primary school, GCSE-aged children, and to further education and university, with the gap in attainment between those who have experienced care and those who have not widening over time (Stein 2012). For instance, Wales-wide educational data demonstrates that there is a 37 percent difference between how many care-experienced young people attain five A* to C GCSE grades compared with the general population, with 23 per cent of care-experienced young people obtaining these grades compared with 60 per cent in the general population (Welsh Government 2016; Rees et al. 2019). Though GCSE attainment by care-experienced young people demonstrated a six percent increase on 2015 data, it was noted in a report by Welsh Government (2017, p. 3) that these inequities should not be accepted and "considerable effort" should be dedicated to improving support for these populations in Welsh schools. The report breaks down the gap in educational

outcomes between care-experienced children and young people against all learners across Wales, using expected attainment figures (core subject indicator) at each level. Figure 1 illustrates that at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 the percentile gap is 23, subsequently widening to 29 at Key Stage 3 and 37 at Key Stage 4 (GCSE level):

Figure 1: The gap at Foundation Phase and key stages between the educational outcomes of looked after children, and all learners at 31 March 2016 (a)
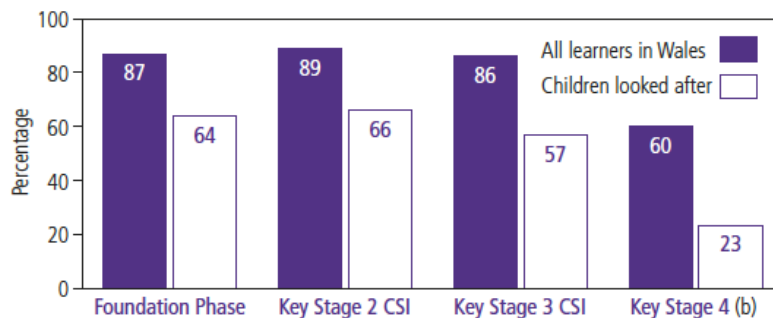
(a) Chart taken from the children in need census.
(b) Level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*–C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics.

(Welsh Government 2017)

Furthermore, the prevalence of special educational needs (SEN) in care-experienced populations is comparatively high in relation to the general population, with 21 per cent of care-experienced children and young people registered with SEN statements compared with three per cent across all children and young people in Wales. To compound this, educational inequities and the subsequent elevated risk of adverse life-course outcomes are intensified for care-experienced populations with SEN, who also attain fewer GCSEs compared with all children and young people with SEN statements across Wales (Welsh Audit Office 2012).

Rees et al. note that "educational disadvantage continues into higher education, with lower rates of university access and completion. Of young people in care, it has been reported that only two per cent in Wales are estimated to enter higher education compared to approximately 50 per cent of the general population" (2019, p. 29, citing Welsh Audit Office 2012). Moreover, it was estimated by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in 2017 that only 220 Wales-based students identified as care leavers joined a higher education programme, reflecting only 0.7 per cent of the total

Welsh-domiciled students entering university in the 2015-2016 academic year (Allnatt 2019).

There has been an increased emphasis from Welsh Government in the years following devolution to improve the educational outcomes of care-experienced children and young people, most recently in a 2016 strategy and through a range of different targeted approaches, as well as by legislation across both Wales and England (see The Children and Young Persons Act 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014). However, despite this, "the relative educational, employment and life-course disadvantages of individuals who have experienced the care system remains a pressing issue" (Mannay et al. 2019, p. 9). In a society where much emphasis and value are accorded to academic qualifications and educational success, this creates significant barriers for care-experienced young people both in and out of education (Brown et al. 2013).

However, as Berridge (2012) argues, a full picture of the progress made with regards to improving the educational experiences and outcomes for care-experienced children and young people is hindered by an over-reliance on measuring outcomes. The author notes that focusing on relative progress can help understand educational achievements, and that "measurement of educational outcomes for this group is a complicated issue and routine, administrative, statistical returns and performance indicators can be problematic and inadequately reflect progress made" (Berridge 2012, p. 1172). Also, as Rees and Munro (2019) note, educational progress and success is inseparably connected with all other aspects of life faced by care-experienced children and young people. Therefore, 'success' should be viewed within the context of the whole child, and their research positioned the notion of 'educational success' is a "misnomer" (Rees and Munro 2019, p. 65).

2.4 Life-course impacts for care-experienced children and young people
As stated above, the educational inequities facing care-experienced children and young people worsen over time, leading to a range of poor outcomes post-18, where many become care leavers. Data in 2016 showed that by the

age of 19, 43 per cent of those leaving care are not employed, in training or in education (Statistics for Wales 2016). Educational inequities faced by care-experienced children and young people therefore span far beyond academic attainment. Allnatt (2019, p. 71, citing Mendes et al. 2014) notes that "policy makers have recognised that education, and in particular involvement in further and higher education, plays an important role in facilitating young people's wellbeing. This includes improving career prospects, earnings, physical and mental health, access to and participation in broader social and community relationships". Consequently, political interest has begun to acknowledge the profound effects that education can have on a vast range of elements of care-experienced individuals' lives. Educational inequities faced by these populations can therefore relate to a range of different life-course outcomes, including, but not limited to, increased risk of contact with the criminal justice system and incarceration, early parenthood, increased prevalence of mental health problems and homelessness.

2.4.1 Criminal justice and incarceration

The Welsh Government (2017) report discussed in section 1.2. notes how the widening educational achievement gaps between care-experienced children and young people and the general population increases the risk of the former having contact with the criminal justice system, confirming a body of existing research (see Schofield et al. 2012; Simmonds 2016). Simmonds (2016) found that 37 per cent of 12-18-year-olds incarcerated in 2015-16 had a background in care.

2.4.2 Early parenthood

Craine et al. (2014) found that five times as many young people under 18 in care in Wales experience pregnancy compared with under 18s generally. Mannay et al. (2019) argue that, although there is research to suggest that experience of early pregnancy and young motherhood can contribute to satisfaction and a transition to becoming an adult in general populations (see Gillies 2007), this can be a negative situation for care-experienced young people who can face stigma as a result of others' perceptions of their status and "presumed incompetency" (Mannay et al. 2019, p. 6). Furthermore,

Roberts (2019) discusses the structural barriers that those experiencing and leaving care face when becoming parents, including stigmatisation, discrimination and lack of access to support, and she stresses the need to prevent "cycles of intergenerational care experience" (Roberts 2019, p. 140).

2.4.3 Mental health

A recent National Assembly for Wales (2018) report noted that care-experienced and adopted children and young people are at greater risk of developing mental health problems due to their increased exposure to trauma and neglect. Nearly half of all care-experienced children have a diagnosable mental health problem (Luke et al. 2014; Social Care Institute for Excellence 2017) compared with approximately one in ten in the general population (Green et al. 2005). Girling (2019) explains how care-experienced children and young people in residential settings have particularly elevated levels of need, such as mental health problems (Berridge et al. 2012), confirming a large body of research which connects these aspects. In fact, a Fostering Network report found the prevalence of mental health problems in these settings to be nearer 70 per cent (National Assembly for Wales 2018). Ultimately, the 2018 report viewed existing emotional and mental health support for vulnerable populations in Wales, including for care-experienced children and young people, as needing significant improvement.

2.4.4 Housing and homelessness

Care-experienced individuals frequently have increased health and housing needs (Schofield et al. 2012). One report from Crisis in 2011 found that 25 per cent of individuals experiencing homelessness in England had also experienced care at one time (Reeve 2011). Welsh Government (2016) connected poorer educational attainment with instability, lack of safety and independence, arguing that many care-experienced children and young people who suffer worse educational achievements do not secure a stable, safe and independent environment upon leaving care.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has clearly illustrated the complex barriers and inequality in outcomes for care-experienced children and young people. The literature presented puts forward the argument that policy makers, practitioners and organisations can do more to support care-experienced children and young people. Connections have been made between participation in the arts and improved psychosocial outcomes for young people; and the current study focuses on an arts-based programme that aimed to attend to this requirement to 'do more' through engaging fostered young people and their families with the arts. This emphasis on the value of cultural and creative engagement necessitates an engagement with the literature in this area, which constitutes the focus of the next chapter.

3. Literature Review - Cultural and Creative Engagement

3.1 Introduction

This research study focussed on an arts programme for care-experienced young people and foster carers in Wales. Contextualisation around the experiences of children and young people in care was presented in the previous chapter. Therefore, this chapter considers culture and the arts. The chapter outlines a range of understandings of art and culture, before exploring its reported value in the field of social research, for wider society, and in relation to care-experienced children, young people and adults.

3.2 Defining and locating culture

For Raymond Williams, "culture is ordinary and that is where we must start" (1958, p. 2). This definition is particularly important as it can be used to counter notions of culture as an elite practice leading to a higher state of being, an assumption that denigrates participation in mass culture (Marsh 2010, p.13). These elite views are conceptualised by Bourdieu (1984, p. xxv) who notes that "to the socially recognised hierarchy of the arts … corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of class". In Bourdieu's view, the denial of natural, vulgar enjoyment affirms a superiority to those who enjoy "refined" pleasures, meaning that art and cultural consumption function as a means of legitimating social differences.

"High art" frequently functions as a category of exclusion rather than inclusion, emphasising the "special and heightened" rather than the ordinary, but Willis (1990, p. 1) argues that "there is a vibrant symbolic life and symbolic creativity in everyday life … even if it is sometimes, invisible, looked down upon or spurned". This symbolic, creative activity can be identified through what Willis (1990 p. 21) terms grounded aesthetics, "the yeast of common culture", suggesting that grounded aesthetics can be part of everyday social relations.

Culture is one of the most complicated words in the English language, straddling distinct intellectual disciplines and diverging thought systems (Williams 1976, pp.76-77). While the word can be used in the sense of nurturing, the most widespread use today is in relation to intellectual and artistic activity (Williams 1976, p. 80). Similarly, Vickery (2007) suggests that culture is a perplexing topic. It is both a social and economic problem when formulating public policy and represents not one discrete sphere of activity but rather extends from social life practices, such as food, clothes and leisure, to sophisticated interests such as the art world. Culture can be seen as an amalgamation of all human activity, "Culture is what humans do", encompassing diverse topics such as society, politics and the economy and categorised by a diverse range of groups (Anderson 2010, p. 3). For Hurdley (2013, p. 7), culture is not incidental to the economy or simply an esoteric part of socio-economic analysis; moreover, "culture is not something that posh people do, while everyone else watches the soccer and gets drunk".

The study of culture is closely connected with the study of power (Cresswell 2004, p. 124). Consequently, dominant groups arguably try to impose their own construction of experience as an appropriate culture for everyone. In Wales, Baroness Andrews has positioned discourses of culture and heritage as sources of power for the future. In her report on Culture and Poverty (2014, p. 7), Andrews argued that although Wales has a rich cultural heritage and a "renowned" sense of place and community, much more should be done in terms of providing access to arts projects. She maintained that an "inverse cultural law" is in operation, which essentially means that those living in the most social excluded areas find it difficult to access cultural assets (Andrews 2014, p. 8). This exclusion is important in relation to the contention that "no disenfranchised people could be emancipated unless they create an autonomous intellectual life" (Rose 2001, p. 7). However, there have been a number of recent projects that have attempted to democratise arts and culture in relation to research, social life and marginalised communities, as will be documented in the following sections.

3.3 The value of culture for social research

In the field of social sciences, cultural projects have increasingly been associated with participatory approaches that utilise literary, visual and theatrical devices as a means of increasing the agency of participants (Jones et al. 2013; Jones 2014; Jones and McIntyre 2014; Conrad 2015; Richardson 2015; Byrne et al. 2016; Mannay 2016; Mannay et al. 2017b; 2018). These projects can create "new spaces for critical engagement beyond the academy" (Kesby 2007, p. 2813).

The New Economics Foundation report, Diversity and Integration (2014, p. 2), suggests that young people who have taken part in arts projects realised they "had the potential to do anything they wanted to", developing social and technical skill and understanding how the creative industries work. Similarly, Bell and Pahl (2018, p. 108) consider that co-production can "bring air into a closed system", empowering communities to construct new life-worlds. Performance-based methods can bring research findings to life adding dimensions and portraying representations which would otherwise be impossible to depict (Leavy 2009, p. 135), whilst the arts "have the ability to inspire the as yet uninspired or render visible the unseen" (Vasudevan et al 2010, p. 54).

These participatory developments have stemmed from a growing dissatisfaction about the extractive nature of social research (Allen et al. 2012; Petrucka et al. 2012). Beebeejaun et al. (2015, p. 560) assert that working with communities as active constructors of knowledge introduces a political dynamic into research. Nevertheless, problems can arise if communities fail to achieve expectations and public value, "co-production, then, is not so much a solution to our problem, but a facilitator in creating the conditions for more relevant solutions" (Beebeejaun et al. 2015, p. 560).

For Chambers (1998, p. xv), participation demands a move from teacher to facilitator, and from lecturer to listener and learner, but as Studdert and Walkerdine (2017, p. 11) contend, "co-production doesn't mean you are never allowed to contribute or have suggestions yourself – it's more about sharing the decisions so that everyone feels ownership". It has also been suggested

that there can be too much emphasis on the techniques of participation. Bishop (2012, p. 9) argues that participatory art should focus on the meaning of what is produced, rather than concentrating on the process, providing a link with a secondary audience not involved in the original production.

As Rasool (2018, p. 126) notes, the arts are a methodology for fighting oppression and power imbalances and for allowing a dialogue at a more personal level. However, Pain et al. (2012, p. 21) warn that power imbalances may remain because "participatory approaches cannot circumvent the paradoxes of power in research and representation, but through closer integration of theory and practice, they extend the processes of theorising and knowing beyond campus spaces". As Freire (1987, p. 102) maintains, hierarchy can never be removed completely, as "dialogue does not exist in a political vacuum. Dialogue takes place inside some programme and content".

Bishop (2012, p. 267) considers that the best examples of participatory art practice provide this "programme and content", rather than a utopian arena in which collaboration is open and undirected. As Janes (2016, p. 82) argues, a "full model" of participation is not only oppressive but conflicts with the way different skills and interests can be used in a complementary way. Nevertheless, Luttrell and Chalfen (2010, p. 199) suggest that the plethora of participatory media projects have not resolved the issue of "giving voice" and that an unresolved problem concerns whose voice is speaking and whose voice is being heard.

Holland et al. (2010, p. 371) suggest that if participants are contributing to the research then their experiences are part of a more complicated whole; the reciprocal relationship between participant and researcher and the way the researcher is both part of the story and recording, which further complicates the issue of voice. It is a common practice in social science research to talk of allowing communities to speak for themselves (Mannay 2016, p. 46); but as Barrera (2011, p. 4) notes, this "masks the awkward question of how it was those voices were silenced in the first place". Similarly, Bell and Pahl (2018, p. 108) warn of the danger that co-production practices can be co-opted through a neo-liberal response that dilutes and represses these forms of knowledge.

For Milbourne (2009, p. 349), "top-down" planning and funding processes driven by an emphasis on targets can clash with "bottom-up" participatory initiatives. In this way, government policies may dictate that "lives are reconstructed, fabricated to fit the dominant ideologies of society" while "the realities of lives that are lived are not represented in official texts" (Taylor 1996, p. 242). Consequently, questions of ownership and authorship demand integrity regarding aesthetic grammars which can then confer status and a sense of pride (Byrne et al. 2015, p. 83).

In Byrne et al.'s arts-based projects in south Wales, researchers were positioned as co-producers of data in line with much qualitative work based on interviews (2015, p. 83). As Byrne et al. (2016, p. 730) note, people's engagement with arts practices as participants rather than as passive research subjects helped in the development of what Burnell (2013) calls "intangible" assets. These can be defined as the dreams, hopes and ambitions that embody the human, social and cultural capital needed to create resilience; and "owing to its highly personal and innovative nature, cultural action expressed through the arts can assist in unlocking these practices" (Burnell 2013, p. 139). As Matarasso (1997, p. 17) suggests, "one of the most important outcomes of the public's involvement in the arts was finding their own voice, or perhaps, the courage to use it".

One way to increase the agency of participants is through what Conrad (2015, p. 4) describes as "social innovation", a concept foregrounded in her youth participatory research in Canada. She describes social innovation as a response to challenges that conventional approaches are failing to address with an emphasis on the co-production of knowledge. In her view, involving people in participatory arts practices allows them to critically reflect on their worlds, producing an impact on the larger community and the enacting of social change (Conrad 2015, p. 5). Similarly, Pahl and Allan (2011, p. 199) stress the powerful effect of being "invited" to do research, permitting a change in agency for the participants involved.

This sharing of expertise across researchers, artists and community members was illustrated in the creating of a participatory theatre performance in Merthyr in 2016. The People's Platform challenged negative representations of the area and created an encounter in which policy issues such as health and well-being could be discussed through a performative representation of local concerns (Byrne et al. 2016, p. 715). In a similar vein, Jones et al's. (2013, p. 18) study of a theatre project on a council estate in the Midlands noted that participants formed a "community of practice" (Wenger et al. 2002) to produce performances about their home area, but there was also an acknowledgement of the importance of contributions from "outside".

These approaches can lead to projects being conceptualised as an "in-between" space, neither part of a government initiative or part of the residents' daily lived experience (Bhabha 1994, p. 2). Bhabha considers that such a space allows for the development of selfhood and innovatory collaboration and contestation. Drama projects involving the community can also be regarded as part of what Mattingly (2001, p. 450) refers to as "new genre public art", providing a catalyst for social change and giving a voice to people who are side-lined by mainstream culture. Unlike postmodern art which aims to critique dominant cultural representations, new genre art combines a questioning approach with a community focus.

However, arts-based research schemes can encounter dilemmas that are exacerbated due to occurring in what Parker and Karner (2010, p. 1451) have described as places with "reputational geographies". The construction of representations can call attention to what can be perceived as a stigmatising deficit, and while it is important to focus on the positive, there is also a need for discovering ways of understanding the problems such communities may face in such a way that gives agency to the people living there (Byrne et al. 2015, p. 83). Nevertheless, while there are significant issues involving arts practices and the community, the widespread application of participatory methods allows for an embodied and reflexive engagement between the partners in these processes.

3.4 The value of culture for society

Cultural projects are increasingly being viewed by academics and policy makers as valuable assets in strengthening community engagement and facilitating grassroots expression. For example, the Welsh Government views culture as a priority, something that is "central to our society and sense of nationhood (Welsh Government 2016, p. 2). Indeed, the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) lists "a vibrant culture" as one of its seven goals, whilst Economy Secretary Ken Skates suggests that culture can be a means of reconciling the divides highlighted by the EU Referendum (Welsh Government 2016, p. 2).

The value of culture as something that can be experienced first-hand and on a small-scale is emphasised by an influential report commissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture stresses that most people engage with culture through the commercial, amateur and participatory sectors rather than through the subsidised cultural sector. The report argues for a move away from a focus on culture as it impacts on cities and the economy to an emphasis on "reflectiveness, empathy and imagination that have as their starting point individual experience" (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016, p. 7). The authors argue that cultural innovation helps communities and neighbourhoods through the development of small-scale activities, constituting "a more balanced and organic path to regeneration" (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016, p. 85). This trend is aided by what Bishop (2012, p. 14) describes as a transformation of the formerly subversive and anti-authoritarian discourses of participation, creativity and community to a position where they are a major part of post-industrial economic policy.

At a population-level, participation in arts programmes has been seen to contribute positively to the social and emotional wellbeing of young people (see Karkou and Glasman 2004; Ennis and Tonkin 2018). In Ennis and Tonkin's (2018) study, the programme reviewed had resonant effects on the ability of young people to develop skills and experience, confidence, social networks and communities and experience transformative self-development. Equally, de Roeper and Savelsberg's (2009, p. 223) research noted the

"tremendous potential of innovative youth-focused arts programmes to engage and empower young people from all social backgrounds". However, Hampshire and Matthijsse (2010) warn against the assumption that arts programmes are inherently good for young people's social and emotional wellbeing and mental health, and that positive changes are simple and linear.

Theatre and dance programmes have also been used to develop a range of psychosocial skills, such as improved self-esteem, efficacy, and confidence in young people (Douglas et al. 2000). They have been employed in the context of young offenders (Davis 2008), as well as young people at risk of incarceration (Ross 2000) and 'vulnerable' young people (see Boehm and Boehm 2003; Arts Council England 2006; Orme et al. 2007). Expressive arts groups have also been explored in the context of adolescent victims of sexual abuse (Visser and du Plessis 2015).

However, encouraging participation in arts projects can often be beset by difficulties, not least the low importance attached to arts subjects in the current school curriculum. William Morris' phrase "the education of desire" which described the sort of education that should be offered is still a matter of contestation today. Professor Dai Smith (2013, p. 8) positioned the curriculum as over-emphasising core subjects at the expense of a more rounded education. In his report into arts in education in Welsh schools, Smith (2013) suggested that arts projects can promote social inclusion and help people reconnect with their sense of place, provide a model of engagement which can be of lasting benefit to the community and improve educational prospects, along with lessening the attainment gap for young people. However, Price (2012) warns that without financial input, the experience of arts education could become limited to a very narrow range of privileged students.

As a means of tackling this issue, a central part of Welsh Government policy on cultural innovation is contained in the Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme, which focuses on economically disadvantaged communities through low-cost interventions that align a range of services and programmes, acknowledging the powerful effect that culture, heritage and the arts can have on boosting life chances (Welsh Government 2018). After a

successful pilot phase, a Fusion Challenge Grants programme is delivering eight projects over two years, utilising culture, heritage and the arts to boost employability, empowerment, the early years and health and wellbeing (Welsh Government 2018, p. 3).

3.5 Care-experienced children and young people and the arts

Alongside the educational opportunities and outcomes for children and young people in care in Wales, Mannay et al. (2019) discuss the increased focus on and importance of their everyday experiences, development and wellbeing, adopting a relational approach to these aspects. Political interest in the arts, creative and cultural experiences of care-experienced children and young people has also increased exponentially over the last few decades. For instance, the UK Government paper 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care' (Department for Education and Skills 2006) catalysed a shift in interest in terms of improving the arts and cultural experiences of children and young people in care settings. This green paper, part of the broader 'Every Child Matters' agenda, looked to pave ways in which the experiences of care-experienced children and young people could be improved.

The 'Care Matters' policy paper also included the political promise that "children in care must have the chance to participate in sports, volunteering and the arts, and be supported to remain healthy and safe". The government at the time collated evidence for the green paper, which suggested that care-experienced children and young people "often tend to miss out on the range of activities enjoyed by their peers. Like other disadvantaged young people, children in care are less likely to participate in sports, to visit the cinema or theatre, or to read a book for pleasure" (DfES 2006, p. 72). The report connected engagement in leisure activities with improved educational attainment and psychosocial outcomes in care-experienced children and young people, such as improved confidence, enjoyment in everyday life and motivation.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, in collaboration with the Social Care Institute for Excellence, produced a 2017

policy briefing on 'The Role of the Arts and Culture in Social Care' (APPGAHW 2017a). This built upon existing work conducted at the policy level around arts and cultural education and engagement in care settings. The report based upon their 2017 inquiry (APPGAHW 2017b, p.1) noted that "high-quality arts participation helps to build skills, develop self-confidence and assist young people preparing for the transition into life after residential care". Although the report predominantly situates arts and cultural participation in the realm of reducing anti-social behaviour and improved educational attainment, it highlights an important perspective for the current study, namely the connection between participation in the arts and improved psychosocial outcomes. The current study looks to draw on these connections in the context of care-experienced young people and their foster families.

There has also been a developing body of research focused on the ways in which leisure activities can improve the lived experiences of children and young people who have experienced care. For instance, Yeste et al. (2018) conducted research on the impact of 'dialogic literary gatherings' in residential care settings in Spain. Their project found that reading and discussing books helped care-experienced children develop social networks and social-emotional literacy (for example empathy and expression), which subsequently improved their academic abilities. Additionally, other types of leisure programmes, such as Kundalini yoga, have been used in care-experienced populations and have been shown to be effective in participant self-reporting of improved psychosocial outcomes (Vallejos et al. 2016).

There is a small literature base focussed on the use of arts programmes in care-experienced adult populations. One such study, by Boehm and Boehm (2003), explored the potential of linking community theatre programmes with social work in a care setting in Israel. Their paper found that "the individual, group and community processes that evolved during the course of the community theatre project contributed considerably to the participants' empowerment, especially in terms of self-esteem, mastery, critical awareness, expression of inner voice, propensity to act, and collective empowerment" (Boehm and Boehm 2018, p. 283).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored different conceptualisations of culture and the arts, and their value in relation to social research, wider society and marginalised communities. The review of the literature has suggested that an engagement with the arts potentially affords several benefits for young people, including improved confidence, motivation and skills. There has been some attention paid to the benefits of engaging with the arts for care-experienced children, young people and adults. This has begun to attend to the central research question, 'What is the current knowledge base around arts-based engagement and care-experienced children and young people?' This will be extended in the rapid review of the literature documented in Chapter Five. The following chapter discusses the methodology applied to the rapid review of the literature in phase one, and the techniques applied in the qualitative fieldwork in phase two of the study.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This study was broadly split into two phases. Phase one required desk-based research methods to review and collate existing data about care-experienced children and young people and arts-based engagement. Phase two involved engaging directly with facilitators, young people, and their carers involved in the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre via interviews, focus groups and observations. The research design for each phase is detailed in the following sections.

4.2 Phase one - rapid review

In phase one, a rapid review was conducted to attend to research question one:

1. What is the current knowledge base around arts-based engagement and care-experienced children and young people?

The rapid review focussed on the current knowledge base around art-based engagement and care-experienced children and young people. A rapid literature review was conducted, synthesising source material from five databases. Searches were also run within 'grey' literature[2], as well as via included study references and 'key authors'. The following sections detail the methodological process of finding relevant source material, and the criteria used to either include or exclude results from the review.

4.2.1 Database searches

The articles and reports in this review were selected using a range of search strings and inclusion/exclusion criteria. These were identified from five databases spanning the social sciences, psychology and social care: Scopus, PsycINFO, ASSIA, Social Care Online and Sociological Abstracts. Appendix 1

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[2] Grey literature is any information that is not produced by commercial publishers. It includes research reports, working papers, conference proceedings, theses, preprints, white papers, and reports produced by government departments, academics, business and industry.

documents the various search strings by database in full. A list of common search terms is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: List of common search terms

'care-experienced'; 'looked after'; 'looked after children'[3] ; 'looked after young people'; 'looked after adolescents'; 'children in care'; 'young people in care'; 'arts engagement'; 'art-based engagement'; 'art'; 'culture'[4] 'cultural engagement'; 'engagement'; 'education'

A total of 1,227 articles were sourced from the above databases, which were screened by abstract for their suitability. This total was reduced to 808 after duplicates were removed (see Appendix 1). Table 2 documents the inclusion/exclusion criteria that was used for this process. The five separate database searches were combined using Rayyan QCRI. A total of 39 articles were forwarded to full text review.

Table 2: Initial inclusion/exclusion criteria for abstract review of 808 articles

Inclusion -   Studies detailing arts/cultural engagement programmes with children and young people in any setting. 'Arts' and 'culture' were conceptualised broadly, incorporating dance, visual arts, creative writing, theatre, museum-based projects amongst many others Exclusion -   All other studies

A full text review of the 39 articles was subsequently conducted. Table 3 documents the inclusion/exclusion criteria used for this process. This was a more in-depth selection process that looked to further differentiate between studies that were specific to the population (care-experienced children and young people) and outcomes (range of improved psychosocial outcomes such

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[3] This review adopts the term 'care-experienced' but acknowledges the utility of a variety of phrases that have been historically used to refer to children and young people who have experienced care either in foster or residential settings.
[4] Including culture, cultural, and so on.

as confidence, self-esteem, relationship-building) of relevance. As a result of the full text review of the 39 database articles, seven studies were included in the review. 31 studies were excluded. One duplicate study was removed.

Table 3: Inclusion/exclusion criteria for full text review of 39 articles and subsequent grey, key author and reference searches

Inclusion - Studies detailing arts/cultural engagement programmes with care-experienced children and young people in any setting. 'Arts' and 'culture' were conceptualised broadly, incorporating dance, visual arts, creative writing, theatre, museum-based projects amongst many others
Exclusion - Studies detailing arts/cultural engagement programmes with children and young people (not specifically care-experienced) with similar intended outcomes to the current study, i.e. demonstrating a focus on improving[5]:
     o social capital/ networking
     o relationship-building and development
     o self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence
       of children and young people
       or
 - Studies detailing arts/cultural engagement programmes with care-experienced children and young people, but with different intended outcomes to the current study, i.e. a focus on improving:
     o educational attainment
     o therapy-based outcomes
 - All other studies
All reviewed articles were limited to English-language studies. No place of publication constraints was placed on the searches.

4.2.2 'Grey' literature search

A number of 'grey' literature queries were run to complement the source material captured in the database searches. These were run via Google using a number of search terms, such as 'art and cultural engagement with care-experienced children and young people', 'art-based engagement care-experienced', 'arts and cultural engagement', 'participation and care-experienced children and young people', and several other variants of these search phrases. Two further articles were included as a result of this search. These articles were included based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria outlined in Table 3.

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[5] *There were a number of studies that met the exclusion criteria but were nevertheless useful for contextual and background information. See Chapter Three for further information.

4.2.3 Reference and key author searches

A third element of the literature review involved searching for additional
papers that might not have been captured by the initial searches. Title
screening of references from all seven included studies was conducted,
leading to one further article being included. Key author searches were also
run to further enhance the scope of the review. From this, two further papers
were added. These articles were also included based on the
inclusion/exclusion criteria outlined in Table 3.

4.2.4 Total number of included studies

In total, 12 studies were included in the review, seven from database
searches, two from the grey literature, two from key author searches and one
from included reference searches. These are discussed in detail in Chapter
Five.

4.2.5 Overview of review methodology

Table 4 illustrates the review process, detailing the total number of articles
reviewed at each level, and subsequently either included or excluded. Table 5
provides a list of included studies by author name, title, year and method of
capture (database search, grey literature, reference and key author search).

Table 4: Overview of review process

Database searches Number of articles returned from database searches:1227 Number of articles after duplicate removal: 808 Number of articles forwarded to full text review:39 Number of articles included: 7 Number of articles excluded: 32 *Grey literature searches* Number of grey literature inclusions: 2 *Reference and key author searches* Number of reference search inclusions: 1 Number of key author search inclusions: 2 **Total number of included articles:12**

Table 5: List of included studies by author, title, year and method of capture

Authors	Title	Year	Method of capture
Coholic, D., Fraser, M., Robinson, B. and Lougheed, S.	Promoting Resilience within Child Protection: The Suitability of Arts-Based and Experiential Group Programs for Children in Care	2012	Database search
Coholic, D., Lougheed, S. and Cadell, S.	Exploring the Helpfulness of Arts-Based Methods With Children Living in Foster Care	2009	Database search
Coholic, D., Lougheed, S. and Lebreton, J.	The Helpfulness of Holistic Arts–Based Group Work with Children Living in Foster Care	2009	Database search
Gibson, L. and Edwards, D.	Valuing Participation: The cultural and everyday activities of young people in care	2015	Grey literature
Gibson, L. and Edwards, D.	Facilitated participation: cultural value, risk and the agency of young people in care	2016	Database search
Gilligan, R.	Enhancing the resilience of children and young people in public care by mentoring their talents and interests	1999	Key author search
Hopkins, G.	That Friday feeling	2004	Database search
Lougheed, S, C. and Coholic, D. A.	Arts-Based Mindfulness Group Work with Youth Aging Out of Foster Care	2018	Key author search
Nsonwu, M, B., Dennison, S. and Long, J.	Foster Care Chronicles: Use of the Arts for Teens Aging Out of the Foster Care System.	2015	Reference search
Office for Public Management	Evaluation of CCE/NCB arts and cultural activities project with looked after children: Summary report to Creativity, Culture and Education.	2013	Grey literature
Salmon, D. and Rickaby, C.	City of One: A Qualitative Study Examining the Participation of Young People in Care in a Theatre and Music Initiative.	2014	Database search
Winter, L. and McAlpine, J.	Working on a dream	2011	Database search

4.2.6 Limitations

It cannot be claimed that this review was 'systematic' in nature, due to it being primarily conducted by a sole researcher without a second individual screening and monitoring the review process. However, this review sought to provide as detailed an overview of the current literature as possible from a wide range of sources and by using many different search variations.

4.3 Qualitative Fieldwork

In phase two, a range of qualitative research techniques were employed. These included observations of the arts programme sessions at the Wales Millennium Centre, a focus group with foster carers, a focus group with arts programme facilitators, and interviews with young people and their foster carers. The qualitative element of the study was designed to attend to research questions two to six:

2. How do foster carers nurture creativity in young people?
3. What cultural forms are valued by care-experienced young people and foster carers and how do they conceptualise value?
4. What enables care-experienced young people to take part in arts-based activities?
5. What are the challenges and issues for foster carers in accessing and sustaining relationships with the arts and cultural education?
6. What changes can arts-based organisations make to encourage and sustain relationships with care-experienced young people and their foster families?

The research sample and methods drawn on to attend to these research questions will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3.1 Research Participants

There were eight young people involved in the arts programme at the Wales Millennium Centre. Seven of the young people were in foster care and one

was the biological daughter of one of the foster carers. This distinction will not feature in the analysis of the data to protect the anonymity of the families involved. The eight young people who resided in five different foster homes and seven[6] foster parents were involved in the focus group and/or individual interview sessions. The arts programme comprised contributions from a number of artists from the creative industries and a focus group was conducted with the three main facilitators primarily involved with the programme sessions. Demographic information about the participants' roles and ages are presented in Table 6. The names presented here are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants. The young people are positioned in situ with their foster carers. All the young people involved in the arts programme were female and aged between 12 -15 years-old. All the participants lived in Wales and were white.

Table 6: Research Participants

Pseudonym	Role	Age
Andrew	Foster carer	-
Anne	Foster carer	-
Amy	Young person	14
Alice[7]	Young person	12
Barbara	Foster carer	-
Bella	Young person	15
Beverley	Young person	12
Claire	Foster carer	-
Charley	Young person	12
Carla	Young person	12
Diana	Foster carer	-
Debbie	Young person	14
Elgan	Foster carer	-
Eleanor	Foster carer	-
Ebony	Young person	13
Fiona	Lead Facilitator	-
Geraldine	Facilitator	-
Harriet	Facilitator	-

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[6] There were five foster families and in two families one foster carer attended the focus group while both attended the individual interview session.

[7] Alice only attended the initial sessions where foster carers were present, and she did not produce a reflexive diary for the Arts Award.

4.3.2 Ethical practice and procedures

The participants were asked to provide written informed consent to take part in all stages of the research process (Appendix 2). The participants chose whether they gave consent for their interviews to be audio recorded and for anonymised quotations to be used in reporting the findings. The participants agreed to both these voluntary permissions. The participants were told that they did not have to talk about anything that made them feel uncomfortable and were encouraged to think about what information they wanted to share. The participants were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any point and that they could withdraw their data from the study. The participants were allocated pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. A risk assessment was conducted, and several steps were taken to help ensure the wellbeing of participants. Ethical approval for the study was granted by Cardiff University's Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. This approval included the proviso that care-experienced children could only be interviewed in the presence of their foster carer. Therefore, the original research design was adapted to ensure that foster carers were involved in the interviews with young people, which were conducted following the completion of the arts-based sessions at the Wales Millennium Centre.

4.3.3 Session observations

The arts programme sessions at the Wales Millennium Centre were offered over ten weeks between 13th May and 21st July. The sessions generally ran from 1pm to 3pm on Sundays and included games, drawing, puppet making, singing, acting, plot development, character development and writing up activities in a reflexive diary to collate evidence of engagement for a certificated Arts Award[8]. The last session was extended to include a meal at a

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[8] Arts Award inspires young people to develop their arts and leadership talents. Arts Award can be achieved at five levels, four qualifications and an introductory award. In this programme the Arts Award was offered at an introductory level and young people recorded their reflections about the activities they took part in within a diary, which was used to evidence their learning and engagement to receive the award certificate. For more information on Arts Award see: http://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=64

local restaurant and to attend a showing of the War Horse[9] production. The researchers attended and participated in the sessions, one researcher attended nine of the ten sessions, and one researcher attended eight of the ten sessions.

Attending and participating in the sessions enabled a period of familiarisation to build rapport with foster carers and young people prior to the focus groups and interviews. Developing relationships of trust, rapport and familiarity was important as this can elicit greater understanding, so that participants may be more open about aspects of their lives (Atkinson et al. 2003; Mannay 2010; Mannay and Creaghan 2016).

The importance of getting to know the families through engaging in the sessions was confirmed in the initial session when one of the foster carers discussed their previous experience of interacting with social researchers. In this earlier case, the researchers had introduced themselves as 'Dr' [surname] and assumed a social distance that made the foster carer reluctant to engage with the project. In this study, both researchers entered the sessions as full participants, getting involved in all the activities (see Figure 2) rather than simply observing from the side-lines. This fostered more conducive relationships with foster carers, young people and facilitators.

Attending the sessions also enabled an ethnographic study of the arts-based programmes based on first-hand observations and reflections (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Fieldnotes were written up after each session as reflexive accounts of the activities, social relations and interactions. These were useful to reflect on in finalising the interview and focus group themes and questions. The fieldnotes were also useful to draw upon in relation to the data generated in the later focus groups and interviews, with respect to contextualising the data and gaining a more nuanced understanding of the subjective perspectives and meaning-making of the participants.

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[9] War Horse is a National Theatre play based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo. The play involves life-sized horses by South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company. The play ran at the Wales Millennium Centre.

Figure 2: Researchers' and young people's collaborative sketches from one of the joint drawing activities
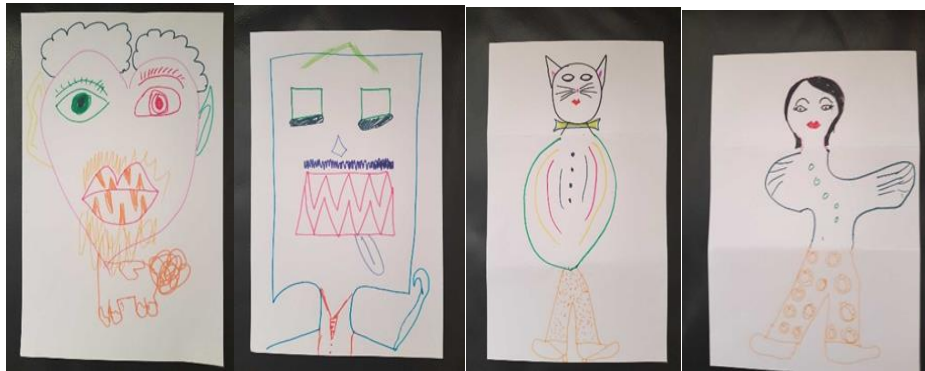
4.3.4 Focus group - foster carers

A focus group discussion with foster carers was held at the Wales Millennium Centre on 1st July 2018. This venue was selected as foster carers were in the building having brought their foster children to an arts session. The initial sessions involved both foster carers and young people, whilst later sessions were only for young people. This arrangement meant that foster carers were free to attend the focus group that ran in parallel to session six. The focus group technique was selected to generate several perspectives on the arts programme and to spark discussions that enabled both shared understandings and differences in opinion and experience (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999).

The focus group was guided by an interview schedule (Appendix 3), but the format was flexible in that it allowed participants to raise other points that they felt were important and generate further discussions. The focus group was attended by five foster carers, Andrew, Barbara, Claire, Diana and Eleanor, who represented each of the families involved in the arts programme. The focus group was facilitated by the two researchers who had attended the arts programme sessions. This enabled elements of familiarity, trust and rapport, as the researchers and foster carers had been involved in the initial arts sessions and joined in with a range of collaborative activities.

Shared knowledge and shared understanding can counter the severe imbalance in intimacy and distance between interviewer and interviewee (Rogan and de Kock, 2005), and this was apparent in the relaxed nature of the focus group interactions. The focus group lasted for 1 hour 4 minutes and 27 seconds and generated 11, 546 words of transcribed data. The focus group was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically, guided by the research questions, relevant literature, and emerging themes developed in the analysis of other data.

4.3.5 Focus group - facilitators

A focus group was conducted with three facilitators from the project, the Lead Facilitator, Fiona[10], and two co-facilitators, Geraldine and Harriet. The focus group was held at the Wales Millennium Centre on 23rd July 2018. This venue was selected as the three facilitators were in the building on this day for a feedback session related to the project, which meant this was the most convenient option for the participants.

Fiona had been involved in developing and planning the sessions and led all the sessions[11]. Geraldine and Harriet were trained arts professionals who each attended approximately half the sessions, working with the Lead Facilitator and external artists and performers to facilitate the sessions. All had a background in working with young people, but none had previously worked with care-experienced children or young people. Fiona had received training from Action for Children focussed on working with care-experienced children, which was a bespoke session arranged for Fiona in preparation for the initial session.

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[10] As noted in section 4.3.2 all participants were allocated pseudonyms to protect their identity.
[11] Fiona was unavoidably late to one session as her car had broken down. In this case, one of the outside visiting arts organisations led the session with Harriet until Fiona arrived. This was discussed in the focus group with foster carers in relation to how this absence was interpreted by the young people (section 6.2.4). This links to the importance of having a level of consistency across the programme and the importance of the key facilitator for young people, which will be discussed later in the report (section 6.3.2).

The focus group was carried out by a researcher who had not participated in the project. This decision was made because if the researcher conducting the focus group held preconceptions about the arts programme, then these preconceived understandings may have had a deadening effect on the interview process (see Mannay 2010). Accordingly, a different member of the research team led the interview to fight familiarity (Delamont and Atkinson 1995). The researcher was able to bring a new perspective on the project and their lack of familiarity with the programme content meant that the facilitators were less likely to leave out important insights due to assumed shared knowledge and experience.

The focus group was semi-structured, following a set of topics developed to address the research questions and additional areas of interest that had arisen during the fieldwork (see Appendix 4). These explored facilitators' aims and expectations of the project, its strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement, as well as its perceived impact on the young people and their families.

To facilitate discussion around these areas, participants were asked in advance of the focus group to consider how they could use metaphors to express changes they had observed in the young people during the project. Metaphor work has been used successfully in previous studies (Burden and Burdett 2007; Goss 2001; Shinebourne and Smith 2010), and this approach was used to encourage participants to take time to reflect on this question, engage with the creative way of thinking that was central to the project, and fight the familiarity that may arise from their close relationships with the young people and immersion in the project.

The focus group lasted for 1 hour and 6 seconds and generated 13, 202 words of transcribed data. The focus group was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically, guided by the research questions, relevant literature, and emerging themes developed in analysis of other data.

4.3.6 Document analysis - reflexive diaries

As discussed in section 4.3.3, young people wrote up elements of the activities and their experience of participating in a reflexive diary to collate evidence of engagement for a certificated Arts Award. Permission was sought from young people and their foster carers to analyse the content of the reflexive diaries as part of the research study. This was useful as in the diaries young people not only charted the different activities, but also discussed what they had learnt and gained from the arts sessions, and what they had liked and disliked. The hand-written diary entries were typed up and stored in word documents related to the central topics, activities and reflections. The diaries were used to extend the data generated with young people in the post-arts programme interviews.

4.3.7 Interviews with Foster Carers and Young People

Interviews were conducted with all the young people and their foster carers[12] following the completion of the workshops to gain their reflections on the overall programme. Three interviews took place in the participants' homes, one in a café requested by the participants, whilst one took place in the home of one of the researchers. All the locations were chosen with the participants' convenience in mind, and with respect to where they felt most comfortable.

The interviews were carried out by one of the researchers who had attended the arts sessions at the Wales Millennium Centre. Consequently, a level of rapport and trust had already been developed between the researcher and the participants, which facilitated the conversations and maintained a more informal environment.

To facilitate the interview discussion, young people's reflective diaries from the project were introduced as a focal point. Using the participants' personal written accounts of the project, along with the visual images within the diaries, fostered reflections on the workshops and reduced the need for prolonged

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[12] As noted in section 4.3.2, foster carers were involved in the interviews with young people as this was a condition of the approval for the study required by Cardiff University's Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

periods of eye contact between the researcher and the young people, which can often leave participants feeling uncomfortable and pressured into providing a response (Corbett 1998). In addition, conducting the interviews in this way offered something different in comparison to more formal interviews, which young people in care often experience. This was important as those within the care system are likely to associate such interviews with negative experiences, which often include difficult conversations about their lives (Mannay et al. 2017a). A checklist of questions (see Appendix 5) was also used during the interviews by the researcher, to ensure that the overarching research questions for the project were being addressed.

The interviews were audio-recorded using a Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim. The interviews generated over five hours of conversation and 55,184 words of transcription. They were analysed thematically, guided by the research questions, relevant literature and other emerging themes developed during the analysis process of all the data generated.

4.3.8 Qualitative Data Produced

The data produced from the qualitative interviews and document analysis is summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of Data Produced

Research Activity	Hours	Transcribed Words
Foster Carers Focus Group	1:04:27	11, 546
Facilitators Carers Focus Group	1:00:06	13, 202
Document Analysis – Diaries	-	3,250
Interview Andrew, Anne, Amy and Alice	41:18	7, 483
Interview Barbara, Bella and Beverley	50:44	9, 272
Interview Claire, Charley and Carla	35:26	5, 743
Interview Diana and Debbie	29:51	1,435 [13]
Interview Elgan, Eleanor and Ebony	36:13	6, 503
Total	*5:18:05*	*58, 434*

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[13] The interview with Diana and Debbie had poor sound quality so could only be partially transcribed.

4.3.9 Limitations

There were some limitations with the sample. The number of young people who engaged with the project was fewer than initially envisaged[14] and the sample were all female, which negated any opportunities to explore gendered aspects in the study. There was also one session that both researchers were unable to attend, and this session was not recorded in the young people's diaries. Additionally, issues with sound quality in one interview meant that some of the data could not be transcribed. However, overall, the triangulation of data generated in the observations, focus groups, interviews and document analysis produced a rich data set for analysis.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological approaches used in phase one and phase two of the research design. The procedures involved in the rapid review of the literature were also set out in detail for the reader. The chapter also communicated the techniques applied in the observations, focus groups, interviews and document analysis. The following chapters present the analysis of this data, with Chapter Five focussing on the rapid review of arts interventions with care-experienced children and young people, and Chapter Six centralising the qualitative data generated in the study of the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre.

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[14] The programme could have accommodated twelve young people, but only eight enrolled.

5. Phase one findings: rapid review of arts interventions with care-experienced children and young people

5.1 Introduction

This chapter documents the findings from the rapid review of the current knowledge base around art and cultural engagement programmes with care-experienced children and young people. The methods used to undertake the rapid review, including the various databases and types of searches used to compile the literature base, and the different search terms and strategies adopted, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria used, were all outlined in section 4.2.

This chapter synthesises the review findings, reporting the main benefits of arts and culture-based engagement programmes with care-experienced children and young people, notably improved psychosocial outcomes such as development of social and cultural capital, relationship-building, and improved self-esteem, confidence and emotional literacy. It will also aggregate studies which reflect on stakeholders' perceptions of good components of, and facilitators for, engagement programmes, as well as the current barriers to arts and culture programmes and the evaluation methodologies that are used to review them. The chapter concludes with a final overview of the evidence base.

5.2 Rapid Review Findings

This section details findings from the various searches described in section 4.2. These studies were thoroughly read, analysed using a basic thematic analysis and sorted into broad 'themes'. These themes are as follows:

- Main benefits of arts-based programmes: Improved psychosocial outcomes including development of social and cultural capital, relationships, and improved self-esteem, confidence and emotional literacy (section 5.2.1.).

- Positive components and facilitators of programmes (section 5.2.2).

- Structural barriers to and social influences on participation (section 5.2.3).

The articles in each theme are presented chronologically.

5.2.1 Main benefits of arts-based programmes: Improved psychosocial outcomes including development of social and cultural capital, relationships, and improved self-esteem, confidence and emotional literacy

Hopkins (2004), in a short report piece in the online Community Care journal, described 'The Friday Club', a programme designed to provide opportunities for care-experienced children and young people to get involved in a range of leisure and cultural activities. Although the short piece does not provide much detail of the participation experiences of the children and young people themselves, it cites a range of benefits via quotes from the adults involved, such as foster carers, child care assistants and senior social workers. They described the programme as a good way for care-experienced children and young people to create social networks with others, whilst the performative elements of the project helped with developing their confidence.

The project was also seen to help facilitate sibling contact and encourage positive relationship-building. Members of the care system participated in the activities alongside care-experienced children and young people, and one of the participants noted that "a good knock-on effect is that they don't see me as the social worker-type person but as part of leisure" (Hopkins 2004). The project also provided paid work opportunities for participants. Other adult-reported benefits included the equalising effect of having a range of ages and mixed-gender groupings, and the positive atmosphere that this created.

In their paper on evaluating the helpfulness and utility of arts-based methods with foster care-experienced children, Coholic et al. (2009) found that their initial results showed a range of positive benefits from their arts-based methods, particularly regarding the improved self-awareness and self-esteem of the participants. The arts methods used within the 17-week group programme were developed from art therapy and were delivered by trained

mental health, social and youth workers. They included a range of methods and activities that looked to improve the social-emotional competence, imagination and personal strengths of participants, and included mindfulness-based approaches and other creative methods drawn from the research literature. The authors noted that "arts-based methods offered a fun and creative way to engage children, and preliminary research findings indicated that these methods can assist children to develop coping skills, self-awareness, and aspects of self-esteem" (Coholic et al. 2009a, p. 69).

The above project, termed a holistic arts-based group programme (HAP), was described in relation to a second group-based arts programme in two subsequent papers by some of the same authors (Coholic et al. 2009b; Coholic et al. 2012). Whereas the HAP programme detailed above generally had four young people per group, the second programme ('ECHO') had six to eight participants and was a shorter but more intensive programme (twice weekly for eight weeks). The ECHO programme was more structured than HAP and followed a short 'curriculum'. Both programmes were however seen to facilitate a context in which 'children can be relaxed and authentic and can be encouraged to build connections with peers experiencing similar challenges' (Coholic et al. 2012, p. 354).

From the HAP post-programme interview data, it was clear that through the leisure and fun elements of the sessions, some of the children developed improved social-emotional skills such as emotional regulation, self-awareness and esteem, as well as coping strategies. Within the ECHO programme feedback in particular, participants' self-reports "indicated that a majority (81 per cent) perceived themselves as having changed as a result of their participation in ECHO. They reported that they had learned to listen and learn better and felt more confident with 'brain work'" (Coholic et al. 2012, p. 354).

Winter and McAlpine's (2011) paper presented findings on a project based in residential care settings in Scotland with care-experienced children and young people. The project, 'Working on a Dream', comprised one and a half hour sessions three times a week for a year, and was a collaborative enterprise with a range of charities, community organisations and professional artists,

designed to create cultural and arts engagement opportunities for care-experienced children and young people. The main objectives of the programme were to develop the academic ambitions and achievements of participants through arts-based engagement and provide networking opportunities for young people within arts organisations. Additionally, the authors noted that 'Working on a Dream' sought to promote confidence, encourage interests, talents and resilience, in turn, building a foundation for developing relationships with others.

Over the course of the project, the facilitators provided participants with a range of different arts-based methods to choose from, ranging from creating music, photography, creative writing, puppetry, and writing lyrics, where the common emphasis was on the telling and sharing of stories and experiences. Regarding the puppet session, where young people made and performed with their puppets alongside residential care staff, one of the staff who took part depicted the programme as "externalising identities and trying new identities which enables young people to develop new ways to experience themselves and others, contributing to their ability to form healthy and positive attachments" (Winter and McAlpine 2011, p. 5).

Evaluations with young people involved in the programme suggested that participants enjoyed the arts-based elements, particularly the drama, dance, music and singing elements. The topic of graffiti, and the debates that artists facilitated around this, also proved to be popular. Many participants (both young people and care staff) described the project as beneficial for improving confidence and self-esteem, helping them to do things that they did not believe they could or would have done prior to the project. The paper states that, based on activities and dialogues with participants, "findings demonstrate that the project has shared positive effects with young people and the units as a whole and that there are certain areas which require more energy to maximise their impacts" (Winter and McAlpine 2011, p. 6).

The National Children's Bureau and Creativity, Culture and Education foundation commissioned the Office for Public Management to evaluate their arts and cultural programme with care-experienced children aged 7-11 across

three locations in the UK. They developed a five-outcome hypothesis based on the four key elements of the project, namely having professional/skilled artists involved, positive activities based around the arts, engagement of foster families in activities, and participant-centred planning and design. Below is a list of each hypothesis, and whether these were demonstrated by the results:

1. Increased self-efficacy and empowerment:

The report found that outcome one was only supported by mixed evidence, with some qualitative data, based on the children's views, showing a strong post-programme development in participants' skills, achievements and self-efficacy. This was contradicted to some extent by the fact that some of the adult participants believed the children continued to exhibit low self-efficacy and belief in themselves.

2. Increased confidence and self-esteem:

Outcome two was also only partially supported, however the evaluation noted particular strengths associated with the fact that many participants had "developed the confidence to take on lead roles of participate in activities that they would not have done before, and that some now felt comfortable participating in activities without the presence of their foster carer or sibling" (OPM 2013, p. 3). This was once again mitigated by the continued low self-esteem and confidence shown by other participants. The involvement of foster families in project activities was deemed to be a good facilitator for building both confidence and self-esteem.

3. Strengthened relationships with care staff, foster families and peers:

There is fair evidence that this element of the evaluation hypothesis was established. The evaluation found that many participants "integrated well into the group… [and] formed close friendships with each other". Furthermore, the arts-based methods allowed foster families and care-experienced children to develop shared experiences and gave foster carers an opportunity to spend time working together with the children and watch them develop new creative skills, giving them space to "work as a family unit" (OPM 2013, p. 4).

4. Development of new 'creative, life and social skills':

This element was supported by stronger evidence, particularly regarding improved communication and behaviour, as well as empathy and understanding, greater focus and improved attention. Having skilled artists and enjoyable creative and arts activities helped facilitate an environment which motivated and encouraged the participants.

5. Increased and sustained participation in the arts:

There is some evidence to support this element, with some participants engaging in after school clubs and music lessons. However, the report acknowledged that a follow up component of at least three to six months would provide more detailed evidence regarding this element. Additionally, the relevance of this aspect of the data is potentially limited by the fact that participants in the project were already to some degree engaged in arts and cultural activities prior to the programme (OPM 2013, p. 4).

Similar to the aforementioned Winter and McAlpine (2011) study, the report outlined a number of factors in its evaluation that contributed to its overall success, notably: having a 'safe space' cultivated by skilled artists; the involvement of foster families; the importance of positive arts opportunities; a small but mixed aged group containing only those with care-experienced backgrounds, and multiple, varied arts activities (OPM 2013).

In their qualitative study of a theatre-based programme designed to explore the lives of ten care-experienced young people through the development and performance of a play based on everyday life in care, Salmon and Rickaby (2014) reported that the drama initiative had a range of positive effects on the young people involved, including the development of skills, resilience, confidence and social connectedness. As part of their study, they were interested in young people's and carers' perceptions of the success of the project across a range of psychosocial outcomes, such as improved confidence, resilience, social connectedness and networking, development of arts-based and creative skills. The authors also looked to generate data based on the quality of the participation and found that all the young people involved in the project enjoyed their time in the theatre setting, especially with

respect to the performative element. The programme was seen to therefore have two-fold advantages, in terms of engaging care-experienced young people in an arts-based (out of care) context and providing a platform where they could develop social networks, relationship-based skills and confidence.

A further paper by Nsonwu et al. (2015) explored the utility of the arts with care-experienced adolescents. The paper details their project, entitled 'Foster Care Chronicles', a two-year collaborative programme between a university and local child social services team, which looked to use group narrative and drama as a creative therapy for young people about to transition out of the foster care system. The programme aimed to improve participants' strengths across a range of creative domains such as speaking, acting and writing. The project also evaluated the participation itself through drawing on young people's reflections, concluding that this strengths-based approach that uses art as a medium helped to develop "aspects of self-image, self-healing, self-efficacy and lessons learned" (Nsonwu et al. 2015, p. 18).

In a similar fashion to Salmon and Rickaby's (2014) study, the arts programme detailed by Nsonwu et al. (2015, p. 22) developed a theatre production based on the "real-life trials and tribulations of a typical adolescent in the foster care system". The core script was written by a child welfare supervisor, and care-experienced young people involved in the project were encouraged to contribute to the script in the form of additional chorus lines based on their experiences. They also developed technical skills alongside the play, such as theatre direction and production. The programme ran bi-monthly for six to eight months at a time. The play was performed to an audience at the end of each project cycle.

The authors noted that:

> This exercise was cathartic as it allowed the participants to give voice and meaning to their lived experiences of being in the foster care system. The participants openly addressed issues of pain, anger, and frustration in examining their grief and sadness that they became wards of the state. As these participants individually wrote their tag lines for the play, the social work facilitators used narrative therapy to

help these foster care youth revisit difficult memories. Often, these youth rewrote these same tag lines as they were able to express their related problems/issues and, in fact, experienced self-reported healing, which is a concept of narrative therapy. These youth found commonalities with the main characters in the play and shared experiences with one another as they were bonding and forging close friendships during their tag-writing sessions (Nsonwu et al. 2015, p. 22).

The participants in the project highlighted five key positives from the 'Foster Care Chronicles' programme: respect and recognition as an individual; reduced social isolation; bonding and friendships; increased healing; and confidence in their ability to construct future plans and goals. Additionally, the fact that the programme was held at a university, where participants could experience what life was like in higher education, was viewed as beneficial for their confidence in future planning, particularly concerning their educational prospects.

Gibson and Edwards (2015; 2016) led a study which sought to understand care-experienced young people's and their carers' experiences, values and perceptions of a range of different forms of participation, including cultural activities. As well as what they term 'facilitated' participation (activities that are organised for care-experienced children and young people by the care system such as groups, clubs and special events), the authors also focused on the everyday participation preferences (informal activities) of care-experienced children and young people, which they believe are often disregarded.

Their study describes the positive influences of participation in cultural education and activities on the development of 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital. Bonding capital represents the chance to develop and share experiences and identities, whilst bridging capital concerns the forming of social networks with peers outside of an individual's everyday experience, which in the case of care-experienced children young people, this was external to the care system itself. Perhaps most importantly, Gibson and Edwards (2015; 2016) note that 'facilitated' participation can often be overvalued, whereas everyday

participation is often undervalued. They argue that this can arise from the ways in which participation of care-experienced children and young people is perceived, namely that participation experiences can either be positive or negative. The authors counter this view by forwarding that "the self-expression found in some forms of everyday participation feeds into young people's sense of autonomy, yet this is not always recognised" (Gibson and Edwards 2015, p. 6).

A recent paper by Lougheed and Coholic (2018) describes their review of an arts-based mindfulness group programme with adolescents about to leave the care system. This built upon work conducted with vulnerable eight to twelve-year olds (Coholic et al. 2016). In this programme, a range of arts mediums were used including painting, drawing, music and 'collaborative play'. The programme took place once per week and lasted for 10 weeks. Although this paper did not present the final results from the project, the authors noted inferentially that participants "reported a variety of benefits including better emotion regulation, feelings of optimism, and improve sleep hygiene. Notably, participants also reported feeling accepted in a group with their peers, which is vitally important for youth who are marginalised given their experiences of exclusion and discrimination" (Lougheed and Coholic 2018, p. 170).

5.2.2 Positive components and facilitators of programmes

Gilligan was one of the first authors to write at length about the potential benefits of leisure, culture and sporting activities on the resilience and relationship-building skills of young people in public care in Ireland and Scotland, at the time noting that it was a "critically important but relatively neglected or invisible role" within the care system (1999, p. 188). This paper considered these activities and pursuits within the context of 'mentoring', which is similar to what Gibson and Edwards (2015, 2016) refer to as 'facilitated participation'. Gilligan's definition is perhaps more specific in that it talks about "the encouragement and support of the young person in care's talents, interests and leisure activities by a committed adult" (1999, p. 188). In all his examples, the author notes how important the mentoring aspect of the

cultural, sport and leisure engagement was in instigating and sustaining participation in the activities. One of the case studies detailed a boy in foster care who was interested in dance performance. The boy was supported by his foster carers through his own self-doubt and the "sexist mockery from his peers". Although not supported directly by empirical evidence, the author recognised the crucial role that foster carers played in 'mentoring' the boy through the process, noting that the experience of performing dance in public had a "transformative effect on his view of himself and his future" (Gilligan 1999, p. 189).

Winter and McAlpine's (2011, p. 7) paper, in its reflections, outlines 'key ingredients' for a successful arts engagement programme with care-experienced children and young people. When the key ingredients were present, the project was seen to help young people "learn in new ways, enjoy each other's company and learn ways of making sense of their complex and challenging lives". These key ingredients are summarised in the following list.

1. Understanding of the project/activities: The need for young people and care system staff to understand the purpose of the project. When this happened, engagement in the activities increased.

2. Participation of care staff: Many young people stated that they enjoyed the activities more when care staff took part as well.

3. Introduction to the project: Many of the participants believed that a more comprehensive introductory session would have been beneficial, e.g. what the project was about, who was involved and why they should participate.

4. Importance of relationships: Both groups of participants (young people and care staff) viewed the project as a facilitator for the cultivation of new relationships.

5. Person centred-ness: Young people reported that they learnt more and enjoyed the activities when they were directly related to their lives and experiences.

6. Relationship with the Curriculum for Excellence: Programme activities were most enjoyable when they offered different types of learning and of expression.

7. Promotion of confidence, voice and agency (Winter and McAlpine 2011, pp. 7-8).

Salmon and Rickaby's (2014) study noted that 'mixed' groupings could be a helpful facilitator in arts and cultural programmes. The evaluations of the reviewed theatre-based programme reflected on how having a group consisting of both those with experience of the care system and those without was beneficial for relationship-building, as they felt that they could extend their social networks outside the care system and collapse barriers with peers without shared experience. Perhaps more crucially, having a diversity within the groups was viewed by some of the participants as preventing the occurrence of stigmatisation and labelling.

Returning to Gibson and Edwards' (2015; 2016) aforesaid study of different forms of participation, their evaluation noted that "where facilitation is embedded and related to the everyday interests and activities of the young person there is an increased likelihood of engagement and participation leading to the established benefits of participation for wellbeing and personal development" (Gibson and Edwards 2015, p. 5). The authors summarised that out of all of the different forms of participation utilised in their project, cultural engagement was potentially even more useful for personal and social development in care-experienced young people due to "the opportunities it provides for the construction and reconstruction of life stories" (Gibson and Edwards 2015, p. 5).

5.2.3 Structural barriers to and social influences on participation

Salmon and Rickaby (2014) discussed the various positive and negative factors affecting the sustainability of participation by care-experienced young people in their theatre programme. On the negative side, they noted that while support from carers could be, and indeed was, a positive influence on

participation, it could also be inconsistent, especially in cases in which young people had travelled from residential care. Other social influences on participation included care-experienced young people's views that it was difficult to maintain engagement with the group alongside other commitments, including the difficulties of staying in contact with their biological families, as well as the financial costs of being involved with the programme. Fortunately, in this project, the theatre company helped with the financial costs of participation, which was undoubtedly a facilitator of continued engagement with the programme. The theatre company also helped with keeping participating young people interested in the programme by highlighting additional performance and arts-based educational opportunities. Interviews with the programme professionals inferred that a large percentage of young people involved in the project stayed in contact with the theatre company, suggesting the programme had an element of longevity.

The authors also interviewed carers as part of their research, and one of the main barriers to participation centred on the fact that care-experienced young people could potentially have problems with sustaining longer-term friendships. As stated above, however, the study found that, from both the perspectives of carers and young people, the programme helped young people to develop and sustain relationships, where "young people who were previously resistant to trying new situations or found it difficult to make friends felt a strong sense of engagement and friendship with other cast members during the project" (Salmon and Rickaby 2014, p. 39). Other reported barriers to participation included carers' reports of having difficulties communicating with the programme facilitators and care facilities, which was exacerbated in the context of residential settings where workers would tend to rotate and where there was often no consistent point of contact.

Gibson and Edwards (2015; 2016) noted that one of the most crucial mediators of care-experienced young people's participation in cultural activities is foster carers' influence on whether they will participate in programmes. Carers' facilitation of cultural activities in more formalised settings can also have a positive effect on how care-experienced young people engage and negotiate their everyday participation. Conversely, the

authors recognise obstacles to this facilitation, namely the structural barriers foster carers can face when engaging with providers of cultural programmes, which was also discussed in Salmon and Rickaby's (2014) paper.

Much of the existing research highlights the positives of cultural and arts participation on the ability of care-experienced young people to socialise and share experiences and identities with peers outside the care network. However, Gibson and Edwards (2015; 2016) opine that the statutory requirement to safeguard can both intrude on, and in some cases prevent, care-experienced young people's participation in arts and culture, which, in turn, can reinforce differences between those in care and those who are not. Finally, the transience that many care-experienced young people face regarding changes in placement can further add to the structural obstacles to their participation.

5.3 Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive report of the 'rapid' review of the existing literature relative to arts and culture focused engagement programmes with care-experienced children and young people. Much of this literature has already been reviewed in a previous study by Peeran (2016), which looked at the impact of arts and cultural education on care-experienced children and young people as well as vulnerable groups. However, this review focused specifically on arts and cultural engagement with care-experienced children and young people.

Consequently, this review updated the literature base from the 2016 report, adding additional reports and studies that were not captured in this aforementioned review. The findings from the rapid review, which demarcated the twelve total included studies into three broad themes: (1) the main benefits of arts-based programmes; (2) positive components and facilitators of programmes; and (3) the current barriers to programmes and the evidence base due to limitations of evaluation methodologies.

6. Phase two findings: qualitative study with foster carers, facilitators and young people

6.1. Introduction

This chapter documents the findings from phase two of the study that drew on focus groups, interviews, observations and documentary analysis. These methodological techniques were applied to explore the views of foster carers, facilitators and young people about their involvement with the programme at the Wales Millennium Centre, and their perspectives on the arts and culture more widely.

The chapter begins by presenting the data from the focus group with foster carers and focuses on key themes around how they engaged with the arts programme, their evaluation of it, and their subsequent engagement with other arts and cultural activities. The focus group with facilitators will then be considered with a key emphasis on changes in young people and their evaluations of the effectiveness of the programme. The reflexive diaries and interviews will be the final focus of the chapter, which will prioritise young people's subjective experiences of the arts programme.

Throughout the analysis of the qualitative data, the key research questions two to six were considered. In Chapter Seven, a summary of the findings will be presented in direct relation to these questions:

2. How do foster carers nurture creativity in young people?
3. What cultural forms are valued by care-experienced young people and foster carers and how do they conceptualise value?
4. What enables care-experienced young people to take part in arts-based activities?
5. What are the challenges and issues for foster carers in accessing and sustaining relationships with the arts and cultural education?
6. What changes can arts-based organisations make to encourage and sustain relationships with care-experienced young people and their foster families?

6.2 Foster Carers' Perspectives

This section draws on the data produced with foster carers, mainly from the focus group data but also drawing on supplementary data from the fieldnotes. The section will be arranged around five key themes: support; motivations for enrolling young people on the programme; barriers and challenges; evaluations of the programme; benefits for young people and benefits for foster carers.

The quotes from foster carers have been anonymised further in this section by not using the associated pseudonyms. This was a deliberate strategy so that the quotes cannot be directly related to the young people who were discussed but not present in the focus group to provide their perspectives on these discussions.

6.2.1 Support

Foster carers nurture creativity in children and young people by offering support for involving them in the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre and in wider activities. They recounted supporting the young people with practical and emotional aspects of participation. For example, they organised their children's involvement in the project, enrolling them and finding out where they needed to be, and travelled with them to the sessions. Additionally, they provided emotional support to take part, primarily by attending the initial sessions and participating in games and drama activities, despite their own discomfort or embarrassment. They also supported the young people's learning from the project, by encouraging reflection on their experiences of the sessions and what they were learning.

They reported actively developing strategies to encourage their foster children to take part in the project. They discussed how the young people were reluctant to engage with this project, and organised activities more generally. The carers used a range of strategies to encourage them to sign-up and maintain engagement and attendance for the whole project.

I had sort of said to her you know it's exciting, it looks as if it's going to be fun and in the end of it we're going to see War Horse… There's been a few blips where they've said actually, I don't want to go. And I've sort of said you know we've come this far, we've still got War Horse at the end and look at all this that's going to help with schoolwork with Drama.

I sort of told them that they were coming along and I made it all super exciting, being a part of research and they're leading the way. So they're like ooh, so they think they're marvellous

If I told her beforehand or asked if she'd be interested it would be a definite no so I put her down, got the place and then told her by the way we're going to Cardiff and it was like oh no but once she came she loves it so yeah

Resonating with previous studies (Gilligan 1999; Gibson and Edwards 2015, 2016; Salmon and Rickaby 2014 (see section 5.4)), these accounts emphasise the central role and importance of foster carers in involving young people in extracurricular activities. The foster carers in this study were actively part of wider networks and organisations related to foster care, which is how they were invited to the project. In this way, they can be situated as 'engaged' foster carers. This engagement was positive for the young people's involvement with the programme. However, as in previous studies (Mannay et al. 2015; Salmon and Rickaby 2014), it raises some questions about how to involve young people in arts projects if they do not have the support of an 'engaged' foster carer.

6.2.2 Motivations for enrolling young people on the programme

When reflecting on what attracted them to the programme, foster carers discussed motivations linked to improving young people's social, emotional and educational development.

She lacks social skills… so anything that involves group participation I'll try and get her involved in… she's seeing a different side of different things, she's in a group discussing and I read like the puppets sessions and I thought well it's making her think differently as well isn't it? So that's why I put her name forward

I mean I have been doing this for quite some time, you know we are all concerned about their education, their maths and their English and things but let's get the social skills first. I think to try and put the whole package together is too much, I don't think they can handle it… I would put every penny I had to try and just get her out and about, out and about and learn from other people

It's more about self-confidence and self-esteem

She's so vulnerable so I think the more that we can bring them to things like this to try them… she's always with me and [partner] so she's not having the opportunities then to build up those social skills.

This focus on gaining skills is perhaps unsurprising given the literature discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the educational and well-being inequalities experienced by care-experienced young people (for example, Harker et al. 2004; Jackson and Cameron 2014; Mannay et al. 2015; O'Higgins et al. 2015; Sebba et al. 2015). Whilst foster carers did not speak extensively about art or creativity, there was a tacit recognition that being involved in arts activities with other young people potentially improves young people's confidence, self-esteem, cognitive skills and social competencies.

6.2.3 Barriers and Challenges

As highlighted in section 6.1 and 6.2, a key barrier to taking part in this arts programme and similar opportunities was young people's reluctance and the issues they have encountered in unfamiliar social situations. The foster carers again emphasised these points in relation to questions about barriers and challenges.

She just hasn't got the confidence to interact with other people so she always looks, it's the constant you know she looks to me to make sure can I speak

And then you just think well why isn't there something going on more locally that all the children that have all got the same traits that they could just go there. And I know it shouldn't be just for foster children but because they are so different sometimes they do need that.

But you take [her] out of [local area] and put her into something completely whatever, she's like a fish out of water, she just cannot cope with it at all

These barriers were about both social skills and locality. Foster carers discussed the physical barriers of getting to venues, and indeed some lived a considerable distance from the Wales Millennium Centre, as well as the cost of activities being a barrier. However, there are two other important points here about locality and belonging. Firstly, the 'fish out of water' excerpt is not so much about travel or cost but rather the importance of opportunities being in the immediate locality, as leaving can be a psychological barrier. Secondly, the point that young people who are care-experienced benefit from opportunities to interact with other young people in care has been raised in previous literature (Mannay et al. 2015). This point will be reflected on in section 6.2.4, when discussing foster carers' evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

6.2.4 Evaluations of the Programme

The focus group was conducted in week six of the programme, at which point the foster carers were able to generate a range of informative reflections on the arts programme at the Wales Millennium Centre. As highlighted in section 6.2.3, the benefit of having a dedicated space for care-experienced young people to come together was regarded as advantageous.

I think they accept doing something like this because they know they're all in the same situation. When you take them to activities I think that's why [foster daughter] hasn't got friends because she goes [other activities], she's been going for years but there's no connection because obviously they're all so different to her so I think when she comes here she feels that much more confidence because she knows that everyone that's here is in care.

And they seem to connect when they're with similar personalities you know with the fostering side of things they seem to connect straight away.

It's like that birds of a feather saying isn't it? It really is.

This suggests that care-experienced young people benefit from the provision of an environment where they can experience arts-based activities with other peers who are in care (see also Mannay et al. 2015). However, there was a proviso that the biological children of foster carers should also have the opportunity to attend, particularly if they were in the same age group.

Because often when you've got the same, they're both the same age and I can't put [foster child] on a certain thing because [biological child] gets left out then she can't understand why can't she have a treat or whatever but this was open too so I put their names down.

A similar point was made about age limits, as initially one foster family were unable to enrol fostered siblings, but The Fostering Network subsequently broadened the age range, allowing both to attend. This suggests that some flexibility is needed when assessing the situation of individual foster families, rather than focusing solely on young people in care.

Foster carers also suggested that this project had drawn on their relationships with the young people and their knowledge of their needs in other respects. For example, they said that it had been valuable for them to be present during the initial sessions to support the young people in navigating the new activities and social space, and to evaluate the other adults (facilitators and

researchers) so that the young people felt happy to be left with them in subsequent weeks.

> *I mean it's lovely the fact that we were all in at the beginning because at first they were like I don't want you to go, I'm like well sorry that's the way that it's going to be and we withdrew and they were all fine weren't they?*

> *Do you think that was better though to come in at the beginning?*
> *(General Agreement)*
> *Yeah because they learnt that they were safe*
> *We knew you.*
> *And therefore the fact that we accepted you, I think gives them acceptance and the confidence to go right okay well you know you've checked these people out, they are okay you know you can leave us now because…*
> *Yeah the fact that you were doing the same, and we were all doing the same then that shows that you are the average, you're not being a berserk foster mum or whatever, you're doing the same as all the other parents therefore you're quite normal and therefore acceptable sort of thing yeah because we were all mad, we were all there weren't we? None of us were being all shy and quiet and like I can't do this, this is embarrassing. Because I think as adults we understood that we had to do that even though we felt absolutely flipping ridiculous but we had to do it to show the children because we encourage them to do things like that all the time you know join in you know be the same as your friends.*

Therefore, although foster carers stressed the importance of the young people undertaking the subsequent sessions independently, the initial sessions with everyone together were regarded as an advantageous aspect of the arts programme. The benefit of foster carers and young people engaging in arts-based activities together, and undertaking 'work as a family unit' has been reported in previous literature (OPM, 2013, p. 4 (see section 5.2.1).

Foster carers also highlighted the importance of the project being run by a consistent team of experienced and flexible staff, who built genuine relationships with young people in the group. This was particularly apparent in the discussion of a session where the lead facilitator, Fiona, had been unexpectedly absent for the majority of the session when her car broke down. The carers agreed that many of the young people had struggled with the absence of Fiona, and the associated interruption to the routine of the sessions.

> It's like if you get a supply teacher. She goes [puts on angry/disappointed voice] 'Ooh, we had a supply teacher today'. They need that consistency no matter what it is, you've got to be consistent. It doesn't bother [older foster daughter] so much she can take change in her stride but [younger foster daughter] the slightest thing that's changed and she goes off the wall.

> But it is very often the small details that can turn into something massive. We take her on holiday and she is really fine but if we go around, go to Sainsbury's and whatever and you turned down a different street it's like the end of her world because we always go… it's very often the very tiny little things.

The significance of consistency, and the impact of change is an important consideration when working with care-experienced young people (Girling 2019). In this case, the absence of Fiona was unavoidable but it nevertheless brought up some useful points about the necessity of having a key person, or people, at all of the sessions so that young people feel safe and supported. The arts programme at the Wales Millennium Centre was designed with the element of consistency, and the feedback from the foster carers suggests that this is something that should be maintained in future programmes.

Overall, foster carers were positive about the organisation of the arts programme. However, they agreed that there was a need for more comprehensive consultation prior to the programme to identify young people's

needs. In particular, they suggested that the issues that arose in relation to food, which could have been pre-empted and navigated better if they had been given an opportunity to discuss these in advance of the arts programme. Issues with food for care-experienced young people have been explored in previous studies (Rees 2019), and foster carers were concerned that the provision of food during the project did not take into account the young people's difficult relationships with food, which they attributed to past experiences of neglect, deprivation or uncertainty around access to food.

> *You can't change that desire to eat, that need to fill up, fill your pockets, hide the food*

> *Strange one with our two, right from when we first had them ten years ago, in the house they've never been greedy kids, well good eaters but if you take them to a party with a buffet it's like they haven't been fed before or it's like they're never going to be fed again really strange. And even now, ten years down the line they know they're going to get fed breakfast dinner tea or whatever.*

Foster carers suggested that clearer rules, boundaries and routines around food were needed, such as the types of food, how much was provided and when it was made available.

> *I think it sounds like last week you know somebody should have actually said actually we've got five minutes for food and they had to put the food away because from the impression that [foster child] said was you know it was a constant stream back and forth to the food all the time*

> *Yeah and then, you know we talk to them all the time about you know healthy eating and I know it was a treat but you know those 25 Dominos pizzas were just like whoa! It was just like oh my goodness*

Yes because like we've obviously said that most of them have got you know a problem you know and issues with food so yeah and that really compounded it that first week you know with all those pizzas. And all the crisps and all the sweet stuff you know the only thing that really as good was you had lots of water but you know and then we all suggested well can we have fruit the next week you know and the fruit all went you know they loved the bananas and the oranges and stuff and that was lovely.

This feedback had been communicated to the researchers in informal conversations with foster carers in the initial sessions, and subsequently fed back to the facilitators and The Fostering Network. This prompted a change in the provision of food to more healthy options. However, the observations of the sessions noted that there were still issues with unrestricted access and over eating, which were difficult for facilitators or researchers to regulate. Overall, foster carers felt that earlier discussions with them at the planning stage could have negated these difficulties.

Another concern for foster carers was the sustainability of the project. They noted that the short-term nature of this project would leave the young people feeling '*miserable*' and '*miss[ing] it*' once the ten weeks were over. They did discuss the possibility of self-organising a meeting during the summer but agreed that this may prove difficult due to their geographical spread, and that the lack of structured follow-up would mean the young people felt the loss of the weekly sessions.

6.2.5 Benefits for young people

Foster carers reported that the project had supported the young people in building social skills, meeting and working with new people, building their confidence, giving them a positive experience that they looked forward to each week, and supporting them in ways that may not yet be tangible.

The fact that they've come, they've done all these activities without us being there as their sort of you know back-up and it's got to be a positive thing eventually.

She seems far more relaxed

Well I've heard that she's learnt that you can have fun, I said so you've never had fun before? Not until I came there.

In the focus group, the majority of foster carers felt that young people did not communicate a significant amount of detail about what they had been doing, or how they felt about the project at home. However, they felt that the experience conferred benefits which will be discussed in more detail in section 6.3 when discussing the young people's reflexive diaries and interviews.

6.2.6 Benefits for foster carers

The carers spoke of the value of getting to speak to each other, share ideas, and ask questions, and, in fact, the focus group itself became a space in which they could support and advise each other.

Yeah it is, it's always nice [to meet other foster carers]. It's nice to hear everyone's stories.
And hear the stories and offer support.
To ask what I should do, because I've been awake all night worrying about it.
Yeah and then you've got a sounding board then.
Which way I should go and maybe to calm down a bit before I go sort of like charging in.

That is interesting listening to different stories and how similar they are in lots of ways you know you beat yourself up sometimes and really try hard in some directions you try and correct certain things maybe.

And you find that everybody else is exactly the same.
{General Agreement}

We're finding that out with listening to all the stories.

Just listening to certain things during the day now and relax on certain things with them rather than trying to push them in a certain direction that will never ever work.

I just like, I like meeting other foster carers and I especially like meeting them from other areas. See how things differ and how things are done differently and you know only small things and whatever but you say oh really oh yeah. It's just interesting things you wouldn't know would you like with [other foster carers] *agency they recommend that each foster carer with them has a week's respite every year. Not the main summer holiday but just a week but then you know there's different, like their agency recommends that, there's different opinions about that isn't there because some of them say well you shouldn't leave the child you should be glued here for everything and then others agree that you should have a bit of a break because nobody can go 365 days a year with them or whatever. So yeah just interesting things like that, different ways of looking at it really*

These supportive relationships and interactions between foster carers were also noted in the observations of the arts sessions and the spaces involving the bringing and collecting of young people. Foster carers discussed the possibility of self-organising to continue meeting after the project had finished, but also suggested that if a similar project ran in future, the carers' meetings could be more formally incorporated into the programme by providing a space for them to spend time together while the sessions were taking place.

Yeah possibly if you did have a room with you know tea and coffee making facilities we probably…

Stay and talk.

Yeah, we'd probably get a lot off our chests

Given the benefits of social interaction for foster parents, it would be useful to explore ways of providing a room and refreshments for foster carers while young people attended sessions.

6.3 Facilitators' Perspectives

This section will draw on the data produced with facilitators, primarily from the focus group data, but also drawing on supplementary data from the fieldnotes. The section will be arranged around three key themes: the outcomes and impacts for young people; the strengths of the project; and the limitations of the project.

6.3.1 Outcomes and impacts of the arts programme for young people

Facilitators' views on the arts programme were almost universally positive, as it had fulfilled their expectations and aims.

> Fiona: *I think I can say truthfully without hindsight, and… from the experience of looking at back at it now, that [what I was hoping for participants to get out of the project] is exactly what they have learnt*

From the facilitators' perspectives, young people had developed their skills in relation to drama, music, character development, and design. However, these were not the focus of the discussion, but were mentioned almost in passing, as a side-effect of the programme rather than a key aim or outcome. Facilitators placed more importance on the 'soft skills' that were developed and how these could potentially support young people in their everyday lives beyond the programme.

> Fiona: '*I think my hopes for the project were mainly around, were not really about actually the outcome or what they created … but were more around building on their kind of soft life skills and like confidence and being able to collaborate with each other and making friends, having fun'.*

Facilitators recalled how the structured reflection that took place at the end of each session allowed them to see clearly how particular young people had learnt or changed during the project, both through what they said, and the ways they participated:

Fiona: *I think looking back on it, you can almost like see the development because at the beginning you know they didn't really want to say anything at all [in the reflective part of the session] and it was mainly the adults in the room saying things. But week by week you know one person would kind of get the confidence to say something which gave other young people the confidence to say oh they've done it… which was amazing, really kind of beautiful to see them feel that they can open up in that way in front of the group.*

Facilitators were keen that the young people's enjoyment of the sessions should not be overlooked; indeed, enjoyment was framed as a key aim and central organising principle.

Fiona: *It was kind of just making sure that everybody had fun and they enjoyed it, and I think because that was so, that was a focus point, wasn't it? For them to just enjoy those two hours being in this environment.*

The friendships developed during the project were cited by all facilitators as an important outcome in their own right.

Fiona: *They all made really, they made relationships with each other.*

Geraldine: *Which is massive you know talking about the changes in the young people from the very start … You could see the dynamic of the group change each week, in a positive way.*

As well as engendering positive interpersonal relationships with peers, the facilitators also felt that it established a relationship with a 'broader cultural experience'. They stressed the importance of making young people feel comfortable in the Wales Millennium Centre and providing access to professionals from across the creative arts. Facilitators felt that the programme provided not only familiarity with the Wales Millennium Centre, but also a sense of ownership over the space.

Fiona: *I think that also helped with feeling secure in the building like they knew the space.*

Geraldine: *It was theirs as well wasn't it?*

As discussed, the impacts and outcomes raised in the focus group centred on confidence, relationality and ownership. However, in practice, these were all presented as interwoven and mutually affecting. This was most notable in Fiona's vivid illustrative metaphor to capture the combination of sometimes intangible effects on young people, particularly on their sense of self.

Fiona: *[Initially] they were like walking really slowly and like can't really see where they're going, all like grey, green kind of muddy colours. And then week by week there would be like less crustaceans on them like stuff like coral would be coming off of them and they could like move a little bit like swifter or more kind of, everything got easier. And then with like all these bits coming off you would see their normal, like their natural colours and it would like by the end, they're kind of like you know neon colours and like shiny and bright and they kind of like glisten in the water. And like the words that kind of stuck out for me is like individuality, like personality like shining through … like you could see like their true colours, the person that they really wanted to be able to show but are so kind of stuck together by all of these crustaceans, it's almost like they're like breaking free*.

Geraldine: *Like those negative things that they hold onto are not part of them, they're just things that they need to shed and they need help to …*

Fiona: *Be themselves really and just have that confidence.*

Fiona's discussion of '*shackles that were kind of prohibiting them from being them*', which then shed as their '*true colours*' became visible, aligns with the literature reviewed in Chapter Three. In line with earlier studies, the facilitators noticed not only the development of skills, experience, confidence, and social networks in young people, but also what they interpreted as transformative forms of self-development (Tonkin 2018; de Roeper and Savelsberg 2009). These metaphors were also linked to specific examples from the programme:

Fiona: *We have all noticed, each person having that, going on their own journey and becoming more confident in being themselves, being comfortable in their own skin … I suppose again it's different for each person and some of it is stuff that that person was aware of, some of the people they're not even aware that they're doing it. Like for, let's take [name] as an example, she was very reluctant, well scared basically at the beginning. But every week she kind of like had a word with herself and like forced herself to take part. So and we could tell that she was so self-conscious and like scared of doing something wrong but every time we praised her for doing something right, even though it was the tiniest thing, like she just like came out of herself a little like a little bit every time. And every week she'd built on that and it just felt like she was just kind of going I don't need to be like that, I don't need to do that, I can do this.*

Fiona: *They all had a completely different journey … they fed back in front of their carers what they, they showed their character and the role profile or whatever and then they also said what they liked about the programme, what they learnt throughout and what they're most proud of. And then so we did a list of like what we're proud of them for achieving and I ended up not being able to do it because I thought I was going to cry, I definitely was going to cry. But each person like we've got a different thing that we're proud of them for achieving which I don't know it's so lovely. It's just like they're not just a generic group and we can't treat them all the same.*

As in the studies reviewed in Chapter Five (see section 5.2), the facilitators all agreed that from their perspective all of the young people had gained something from attending the arts programme, and that this could be evidenced from the visible changes in their engagement, confidence and relational practices. These changes were attributed to some of the arts programme's underlying design features, as explored in the following section.

6.3.2 Facilitators' evaluation of the strengths of the project

Two key aspects emerged in the facilitators' discussion of the strengths of the project, which enabled them to achieve the impacts described in section 6.3.1. These were the importance of strong relationships within the group, and the development of a secure, safe and comfortable environment in sessions which allowed for taking risks and accepting challenges.

Specific facets of the project's design were cited as facilitating the development of strong relationships within the group. In particular, the availability of sufficient staff on the project was key, as it allowed facilitators time to get to know the young people individually, to understand their needs, and to ensure they felt valued and heard.

> Fiona: *But that was another positive … nothing was missed you know like we could clock things and like Geraldine would jump in and go with them or you know we could kind of rotate and just have all eyes on the room. I think that was, in particular with this group because we didn't know what they were bringing into the room … I felt confident that everybody was going to be looked after.*
>
> *{General Agreement}*
> Geraldine: *You need, you just need you know someone's always making sure that everyone is alright. Like, you just can't have a situation where someone is left on their own for a time and they're obviously feeling like I need support. Yeah and there's no one spare yeah.*
>
> Harriet: *It would have been horrible if that happened.*

Resonating with the focus group discussion with foster carers (section 6.2.4), facilitators also noted the importance of consistency in staffing. Fiona reported that having herself and at least one of the co-facilitators present every week as the '*constant people*' was vital in building good relationships with participants, '*because we were always together we were the safety net so they kind of knew we were there*'. However, in the foster carers' group there was an underlying message that young people were particularly invested in

Fiona, who as lead facilitator attended every session. This could suggest that it would be useful for co-facilitators to also be in attendance for every session, rather than the sessions being divided.

An issue concerning staffing levels that was not referred to in the focus group was the presence of the two researchers. As the researchers were active participants in the sessions, in many ways they took on some of the roles of facilitators. At each session, Fiona was in attendance and supported by Geraldine or Harriet, whilst there was also a member of The Fostering Network present for every session and some sessions were attended by a member of staff from Action for Children. In the fieldnotes, researchers recorded how they also 'helped out' by meeting young people if they arrived late, showing them the way to the toilets, helping with spelling in the reflexive diaries and a range of other supportive actions during the activities in the sessions. The researchers were not factored into the planning of the event, which means that in the initial design there would have been two less adults in the sessions. This could have impacted on the time for and responsiveness to individual young people's needs and requirements.

The facilitators reported that developing supportive relationships and emotional connections within the group also helped the young people to feel secure and safe. They discussed at length how these feelings of safety and security enabled young people to engage with the challenges posed by the project, such as spending time in an unfamiliar cultural space, participating in activities that pushed them out of their 'comfort zone', and working in new ways. The flexibility of the programme and the non-hierarchical nature of the relationships was vital here, as staff were able to role-model 'joining in' and display a 'give it a go' attitude to support the young people in taking risks.

> Fiona: *One of the massive positives of the way that this programme is, is that it is flexible… we very much responded to them. And that was okay you know it wasn't like it has to be like this and they have to have achieved this by the end of it*

> Geraldine: *We were speaking earlier you know there were some workshops where not everybody wanted to get involved and that was*

always cool, that was fine and we just let them have however much time and it was never kind of come on you need to get involved. We were just like yeah get involved if you want to get involved.

Harriet: *And they really liked that, they took that on board really well*

The flexibility of the arts programme meant that the facilitators could create a space that negated the recreation of 'schooled subjects' and 'schooled docility' (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008, p.506) and instead fostered an environment where everyone was respected and respectful.

Fiona: *We always spoke to them as level, like we never spoke to them as children … They were always equals … I never got the impression that everybody was like on a lower level or that we were kind of belittling. Like everybody was always positive about each other and we spoke to them like I would speak to you.*

Geraldine: *Yeah exactly, yeah. They were of that age where you can do that and it's like you know none of us are like teacher-y types anyway, but especially I think it helped that we all just … it's like peer but you also step in when you see that they're uncomfortable, when they need help, but not in a way that's like obviously like oh I am here to help you, do you need some help? It's just like you sidle over and you know just give that little boost*

Fiona: *There was a lot of respect in the room wasn't there?*

Geraldine: *Oh yeah. Yeah, no one as like mean to each other or looked down on each other. You know there was challenges but they were all very respectful of each other and the space.*

Facilitators also discussed the ways in which routines and familiarity were created by keeping key practical aspects the same over the course of the programme. In addition to securing a consistent staff presence, the sessions took place in the same building each week, with the same basic structure.

Fiona: *Generally, we were in the same room every week and I think that also helped with feeling secure in the building like they knew the space ... And we had like a meeting point downstairs so everybody met there, we went to get them and we all went up together. Again it was just like embedding a routine which we felt that was … Like, really important. It was important to have a routine like we all met, we all went upstairs, warm up, did the activities, reflection, food.*

Harriet*: So you can like have the same framework but the things that change aren't so daunting because you've still got that familiar setting.*

The project was also carefully designed to build up gradually from 'safer' to more challenging activities. Fiona used the example of the weekly warm-ups, which started simply but became more challenging as the project developed. Facilitators encouraged active reflection to '*see the result of something, like a positive result of doing something*', supported with '*praise, lots of praise and kind of acknowledging the amazing job that they've done*' (Fiona), in order to build the young people's confidence and willingness to be 'pushed'.

Reflections on the arts programme were positive and facilitators felt that the core aspects discussed in this section should be replicated in future programmes. Facilitators felt that it was vital to include a structure that allowed the development of strong peer and facilitator relationships, and a sense of safety, clear routine, a gradual build-up from 'safer' to more challenging activities, sufficient permanent staff, and the flexibility to invest in developing strong relationships and prioritise young people's enjoyment of sessions.

6.3.3 Facilitators' evaluation of the limitations of the project

Although the focus group discussion prioritised positive aspects of the arts programme, facilitators noted a number of limitations and suggested potential amendments. These were related to training, recruitment, time, the Arts Award, food and sustainability.

Facilitators reported that future iterations of the programme should include more extensive training for staff on working with care-experienced young people. Fiona noted that although she had received some training, this needed to be extended to other facilitators, and take place further in advance of the programme's start date.

> Fiona: *One other thing that I would do differently is just make sure that there's more training at the beginning because I had some training like a week before it started and I would have liked to have that like way longer. Because actually it influenced how I set up the programme and I kind of wish that I would have had that knowledge a little bit sooner. Not that I needed to make like loads of changes but I think you guys should have had the training that I had.*

Fiona also highlighted the value of having the support on the project of someone with expertise in the needs of care-experienced young people, as members of The Fostering Network and/or Action for Children attended the sessions. However, Fiona noted that she had had to request that this was provided for all the sessions and felt that it should be a set requirement in future programmes.

Facilitators also commented that only girls had taken part in the project and that the recruitment methods had only reached 'proactive' foster carers, which resonates with the earlier discussion about the young people attending only being able to do so because they resided with 'engaged' foster carers (section 6.2.1, see also Gilligan 1999; Gibson and Edwards 2015; 2016; Salmon and Rickaby 2014 (section 5.4)).

> Fiona: *So, it's obviously a proactive carer that would pick something like this up and some of them were coming from … really far and it's yeah I mean credit to them really for that commitment. Yeah so how are opportunities like this getting to those young people that maybe aren't … connected or their carers maybe aren't as ready to connect. I don't know, how is it getting out for them*.

Another aspect that facilitators felt required attention was time. All facilitators expressed frustration that they had not had enough time to cover everything

they would have liked to include, such as developing young people's ideas and creations further, or taking them to a museum or another cultural space.

> Fiona: *It would have been nice if we had a bit more time for them to like work on … their characters and their puppets so far, it would have been nice to have had time for them to develop maybe a scene together with their character or like a script or something, we could have brought a script-writer in.*

However, the facilitators agreed that two hours was the 'perfect' length of session, as it was short enough to keep participants' attention and leave them excited for the next session. Therefore, they were not suggesting that the length of sessions was extended, but rather that it would be useful to extend the number of sessions.

Issues with time were also linked with the requirement for young people to complete the Arts Award. Facilitators expressed mixed views in relation to the Arts Award that young people undertook as part of the arts programme. On the one hand, they agreed that it brought a significant administrative burden for facilitators, and sometimes seemed to distract from the other aims of the programme. On the other hand, they noted the value in achieving a qualification in addition to the other benefits young people were already getting from the activities. Additionally, working towards and achieving the Award was seen as helping to improve young people's, confidence, critical thinking and self-awareness.

> Fiona: *Like one session we had to spend like completely just on filling in their diaries which to me felt like a bit of a shame because that's not, we're not here to do the Arts Award, we're here to do this programme. But you know it's a bonus to get a certificate for their work.*

> Harriet: *Do you think it will like help their confidence like having the certificate?*

> Geraldine: *I think so and it's like when we were speaking earlier about them getting into the habit of critically thinking and self-awareness and evaluating and that's a good, that's a cool thing to do. Like you were*

saying earlier on, like oh what did I learn from doing that task or
workshop and I think that will help their development in everything they
do on a daily basis and in education.

A clear conclusion as to whether the Arts Award should be included in the project in future was not reached in the focus group discussions. However, all facilitators highlighted the value of the reflective diaries that were completed for the Arts Award, and the reflective space scheduled within the sessions to complete these diary entries.

As in the focus group with foster carers (see section 6.2.4), food was also a source of contention. As with the Arts Award, facilitators noted that the provision of a full meal during the sessions took up significant time that had not been fully accounted for when planning the project. Discussing their own views, as well as feedback received from young people and foster carers involved in the programme, they noted that it was difficult to provide a meal that fulfilled the needs and requirements of all young people and their carers.

As reported in earlier studies (Rees 2019), there was a recognition that the provision of food could be useful in terms of bonding and bringing the group together. However, overall, as the majority of the sessions only ran for two hours, the general consensus was that a full meal was not necessary, and that snacks were sufficient. As the timing of the sessions was one to three o'clock, it was also suggested to move this time slot to a morning session.

> Geraldine: *I do thinking eating together can be like a bonding kind of*
> *thing but if it's two hours it's two hours you know like it was nice when*
> *we went for the meal on the last day but that's a different thing*.

Lastly, resonating with the focus group with foster carers (section 6.2.4), there were also concerns around sustainability. Reflecting on their emotional connection to the young people, the staff expressed disquiet about the abrupt ending of the programme, and the sustainability of its outcomes if delivered as a one-off set of ten sessions.

Fiona: *And you know what happens to them now, and that for me is just a little bit like … oh. It feels like, it feels like something has ended and that makes me nervous about like what happens to them now. Where does what they've learnt go? So like follow-up for me is something that is maybe missing like you know it's you know the bond that we have created, built, with them and with each other like this can't be the end now … Yeah, it's just the kind of, that after-care.*

The facilitators made some amendments to the project to address this abrupt ending and consider the 'after-care' of participants. Fiona ran an 'add-on' session to finish any remaining work on the Arts Award and also so as to more fully mark the end of the project and the young people's achievements. Facilitators suggested that in future years this could be extended in two ways. Firstly, by acknowledging young people's achievements with a 'graduation' celebration, and secondly by inviting them to return in future iterations of the arts programme and speak to the next generation of participants.

Geraldine: *I was going to say that they can maybe pop in and kind of share their experience and almost be like a little mentor, how the project made them feel and what they gained from it - that could be nice for some of them.*

Fiona: *Yeah definitely there's like a circle, a circle of life, thing! That's something, there's definitely an opportunity for them to influence other people.*

Geraldine: *Because they were really brave to take part in the project weren't they really?*

Fiona: *So brave. So brave.*

Harriet: *And dedicated.*

The facilitators felt that these two extensions to the arts programme could contribute to ensuring that the young people's participation, and the work and emotional energy they put into the project, was valued and acknowledged.

6.4 Reflexive diaries and interviews

This section draws on the young people's diaries and the data produced with foster carers and young people in the interviews, with a specific emphasis on the voices of young people. The section will be arranged around four key themes: arts-based skills and knowledge; personal change and development; relational aspects; and limitations and recommendations.

6.4.1 Arts-based skills and knowledge

In accordance with the review of evidence presented in Chapter Five, in their reflexive diaries, young people suggested they had developed a greater awareness of their own creativity, or that they had learned to be creative. Much of this discussion was in relation to the characters that they designed, drew, developed and subsequently made into puppets, as illustrated in Figure 3. Young people also referred to a task with visiting artists where they worked with objects, assigning the objects characters and bringing them to life with movement.

> Charley (reflexive diary)[15]: *I learnt that I'm creative … I learnt how to make a puppet move and how horses move/walk … I've enjoyed making the puppets especially answering the questions about the character, which were silly and creative because it was funny and I enjoyed drama*

> Carla (reflexive diary): *I learnt that you don't have to be good at drawing to make a picture. Also how to make a new character. I enjoyed doing hot seat and making new facts about my character. I learnt that just by people asking you questions you can create a life to your character. I've learnt how to make characters out of random objects. I've learned how to create characters out of completely nothing, use my imagination to make new things, different skills, and different aspects of performances. I am most proud of creating a*

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[15] Data drawn from young people's diaries is highlighted with the descriptor (reflexive diary). Data drawn from the interview data does not have any added descriptor.

character by different people drawing or adding bits to it and then
making my character real and giving it a background story. Also I'm
proud of making characters out of random objects.

Debbie (reflexive diary): *I enjoyed creating stuff … I learnt how to be*
creative

Debbie: *The puppets that we made … They were fun to make*

Creativity was centralised in young people's accounts and their enjoyment of being and becoming more creative can be deemed a strength of the arts programme, particularly as creativity has been cited as being beneficial for young people (Robinson and Aronica 2018). The involvement of artists from War Horse also enabled young people to explore the technical aspects of control and movement and extend their skills and understanding.

Bella (reflexive diary): *I have learnt that it looks easy to make a puppet*
move but it's not it's really hard. I loved making the horse move and
making our little human moving her. Watching everyone trying to move
their horses. I loved knowing how they moved the horses.

Figure 3: Puppets made to represent young people's characters

6.4.2 Personal change and development

The reflexive diaries and interview data emphasised the ways in which young people's confidence improved during the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre.

> Amy (reflexive diary): *I learnt how to overcome challenges and to have fun. Learnt how to be confident around others*

Foster carers also discussed how young people changed across the sessions. These conversations were both in relation to the young people they care for and other young people taking part in the programme. For example, Anne and Amy discussed another young person who had originally sat on the periphery during the early sessions, but then began to take part in the activities.

> Anne: *Like confidence for like most of them has changed. Like they were quite shy at the beginning, then their confidence grew.*
>
> Amy: *I remember one little girl that was very reluctant to join in the very first weeks. The* [hair colour] *girl. She was very, very quiet.*
>
> Anne: *She sat out of most them and …*
>
> Amy: *And then joined in.*

This change in confidence was also noted by Claire, who saw this not simply as something that occurred within the programme itself, but as a platform that foster carers could build on with young people outside of the programme.

> Claire: *I think it could bring them out of their shell and then you could, as a foster carer you could pick up ideas on what was done in the sessions to make someone carry on with it at home and everything.*

This comment suggests that the impacts of the programme could have a degree of sustainability, whereby foster carers would implement what they have seen into their practice and activities in the home. Resonating with the review of literature in Chapter Five, as well as confidence building young people also commented on learning other skills such as listening, thinking on the spot, patience and perseverance.

Amy: *Actually learnt how to listen as well ... Yeah thinking on the spot. I actually have common sense now.*

Amy: *Oh I had to have patience with that … And then those things, the ears didn't want to stay on, the eyes didn't want to stay on so we were all getting frustrated and then I helped Debbie, her clothes didn't want to stay so I was like oh god.*

Debbie (reflexive diary): *I learnt teamwork … I learnt to have patience*

The reference to patience in Debbie's reflexive diary was discussed further in the interview.

Researcher: *What was it that made you keep going then and not give up?*

Debbie: *I don't know … I don't know… I surprised myself*

Debbie's point that she '*surprised*' herself and that she had '*learnt to have patience*' indicates that the programme played a key role in developing skills in young people. Young people were also surprised by how quickly they settled into the programme and felt comfortable, in contrast to other areas of their lives.

Bella: *I was surprised how quickly I fitted in because when I don't feel comfortable where I am I won't eat and I don't think Barbara realised the first time because she was like oh Bella pizza. I love pizza but if I don't want to be there, I will not eat. But I noticed on the second one I started to feel okay like because I don't like eating where I don't know someone very well. Like I won't eat if there's like a boy that I don't know or if anyone brings me to a new friend I will get my food and I will go eat it somewhere else, I won't eat it in front of them, I don't like it.*

Once again, this comment, along with other data in the interviews and observational fieldnotes suggest that the programme engendered a safe and comfortable space that supported the development of social pedagogy. This can be especially important for care-experienced young people who often

have to deal with complex emotional challenges and issues. This is illustrated in the following extract from the interview with Anne, Amy and Alice.

> Amy: *Yeah. And then I loved seeing War Horse because I love War Horse and I didn't even cry*.
>
> Researcher: *Really? Yeah I think I cried when I watched it.*
>
> Amy: *I didn't. I really wanted to though.*
>
> Researcher: *That's okay though I suppose.*
>
> Amy: *I wanted to cry but I couldn't.*
>
> Anne: *Because she's learnt to cry, it's a new thing*.

The programme was identified as an important site for confidence building, learning patience and encouraging perseverance, within a space where young people felt socially and emotionally safe and supported. The accounts of foster carers and young people resonated with the data generated with facilitators, who also noted the development of these skills in young people (see section 6.3.2) and the findings of previous studies (see section 5.2.1). These points were often linked to interpersonal relationships, which supported growth and change in young people and are explored in the following section.

6.4.3 Relational aspects

Young people felt that they had gained new friendships through the project, which some had maintained after the project ended. However, having foster carers with them in the initial sessions was welcomed by some young people. This resonated with foster carers' accounts (see section 6.2.4) that positioned this inclusive approach as a positive aspect of the arts-based programme. It could also be linked to developmental discourses, which contend that a reliable 'secure base' can encourage and render safe exploration of the wider world for children and young people (Bowlby 1988).

Ebony: *Like I felt more comfortable with Eleanor there, with the adults yeah…. When we first started the session I was really scared to talk to anyone but when I started talking to them more and often, I got used to it.*

In accordance with the findings of earlier studies (see section 5.2.1), friendships and positive relationships with facilitators were regularly highlighted in the interviews as a strength of the programme.

Ebony: *When we went it was like, yes, get in! Because it's nice to meet new friends and hang around with them as well.*

Amy (reflexive diary): *Loves making new friends*

Debbie: *I made friends yeah, but only one person I made contact with outside.*

Beverley: *I think it's just like fun activities, you socialise, you make new friends, and it feels like we're in one big family, that's what I think it is.*

Beverley's metaphor of '*one big family*' aligns with the field observations, which noted the supportive atmosphere that characterised the group and their interactional practices. The informal and relaxed environment created by the facilitators, and the accompanying activities that required participants and facilitators to work collectively and collaboratively, were reported as engendering a space that was more conducive to the development of friendships. For example, in the interview excerpt below, Amy, and her foster carer Anne, discuss how Amy does not normally make friends so easily and that the activities were facilitative in forming relationships.

Amy: *I made friends straight away … Yeah. Like with Barbara's, like Bella and Beverley made friends straight away. And then Debbie as well.*

Researcher: *Yeah, yeah, yeah so you're quite good at making friends then quickly or?*

Amy: *No*

Anne: *No*

Researcher: *Okay so what do you think it was then?*

Amy: *I don't know [laughs]. Maybe the Pablo game, the one where you all had to go in like groups and do those animation things.*

The importance of the activities for foregrounding teamwork and collaboration, and the central role played by facilitators, were a feature across young people's reflexive diaries and interviews, and the accounts of foster carers.

Charley (reflexive diary): *I've learned how to work in a team and use my imagination to create a script for a drama performance and everything else.*

Beverley (reflexive diary): *I loved the tableau because you learn to get along with people and make friends.*

Debbie (reflexive diary): *I learnt teamwork*

Claire: *Fiona, she was very good wasn't she … She carried it didn't she really, you know what I mean … Yeah, the energy and enthusiasm and whatever yeah.*

Eleanor: *Yes, the work itself was very, very good. Especially if Fiona is running them… Geraldine was very good as well*

Ebony (reflexive diary): *I have learnt that working together as a team. It will do things faster … The puppet making was really fun and I enjoyed it. I think that Geraldine was great. Geraldine was amazing was helping us. On the picture bottom right is mine and Alice's butterfly. We didn't quite finish it. All the others were amazing. We all work together as a team. Working in a team is AMAZING!*

In this way, the arts-based programme could be interpreted as a learning space that incorporates the core tenets of a social pedagogy approach, emphasising the fundamental importance of trusting relationships (Ruch et al. 2017). This is not to say that tensions and conflicts between young people did not exist but, as illustrated in Bella's reflexive diary, these issues were also framed as opportunities for learning and development.

Bella (reflexive diary): *I'm proud of myself not getting into conflict and I managed to make friends and my confidence has improved*.

The point written by Bella was discussed in more detail in the interview with her foster carer, Barbara, and foster sibling, Beverley.

Barbara: *There was a bit of a conflict between Bella and one of the other girls and by the end of it the way that you dealt with it was mature and sensible and even though inside it really upset you and bothered you, it did, it bothered you horribly, but you dealt with it in a really mature way. So that was good … I think if I can be honest here, it's very difficult for looked after children sometimes to make new friendships and to forge new bonds and I think although they may not realise this, that this you know you've gained a skill from attending this in learning how to make new friendships, I think that was a huge thing. No, you may not think that now but it did, it equipped you, the way that you dealt with that conflict and the way that Beverley showed maturity towards the other children, no I think it does, I thought it gave you some skills*.

Bella: *I learnt one skill*.

Barbara: *One skill?*

Bella: *Avoid conflict, the best way*.

Beverley: *And making friends, socialising*.

Barbara's contention that it can be more difficult for care-experienced young people to make new friends and social bonds has been reported in academic literature (Girling 2019). Therefore, that both Bella and Beverley have made new friendships during the arts-based programme is positioned as significant, as is the learning and development related to this sociality and relationality.

6.4.4 Limitations and recommendations

Overall, young people were highly positive about the arts-based project and in their reflexive diaries this was communicated via their comments that there was nothing they would change, which was again reiterated in the interviews.

Carla (reflexive diary): *There's nothing I would do differently.*

Amy (reflexive diary): *I don't want to change anything … Nothing to change!*

Researcher: *What about things that you maybe thought you didn't like?*

Amy: *Good question because I can't think of anything.*

The only comments that asked for a change in the programme in the reflexive diaries were related to bringing back pizza, after this was replaced with a sandwich-based lunch after foster carers raised the issue of providing a healthier alternative (see section 6.2.4).

Charley (reflexive diary): *Next time I would change the food to pizza*

Ebony (reflexive diary): *Pizza at the end of the session … Next time pizza … Next time PIZZA*

In the interview, Charley further discussed the popularity of the pizza lunch and her disappointment when this was changed.

Charley: *Oh yeah, we had pizza. That was the best thing … Because it's free Domino's pizza. If you go into the place and they say right here's an orange, you don't like it's an orange but if someone they give you like Dominos pizza then you're going to go, oh now that's good innit? ... No, no one got fed up of the pizza it was because they* [foster carers] *wanted something more healthy … Who wants something more healthy?*

There were also some suggestions to make the lunch more communal.

Amy: *Maybe next time join them together … Maybe like put a table out and get everyone sat down.*

Amy's comment centralises the communal aspect of sharing a meal, rather than sitting separately with plates on chairs around the edge of the room. This request aligns with previous work about the importance of mealtimes and their potential for building and strengthening relationships for care-experienced children and young people (Rees 2019).

The buffet style, 'help yourself' approach to the lunch was also criticised in the interview with Barbara, Bella and Beverley.

> Beverley: *We need someone to* [be] *like standing, make sure that it doesn't disappear in one second. Like when I wasn't by there I was like where's all the cakes*?

> Barbara: *Nobody took ownership, it was just left on the table, help yourself. And you know all of them from what I can see were sensible apart from the one child who had huge issues and you know we all know that some children do have you know problems and she clearly did, bless her… I think yeah it needs to be looked at for next time … You [Bella and Beverley] don't have any issues with food but some children do, whether they're looked after or not, some children do. No, but if you did have an issue with food and I came back and thought oh my goodness you know look all the work that I'd done with you over the years would be undone.*

> Beverley: *Should they have a measuring tape[16] like, no.*

> Bella: *Even better you could order, you can have like an order sheet.*

In the focus group with foster carers, the type of food offered was seen as problematic (see section 6.2.4) and in the interviews this was extended to the delivery style of the lunch. Foster carers, and some young people, felt that the arrangements should be considered more carefully, and adaptions made in future arts-based programmes.

There was also a point raised in relation to the gender balance of the young people who were all girls. This was raised as a limitation of the sample in

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[16] The reference to the measuring tape here relates to having someone measuring out, and restricting portion sizes.

Chapter Three (see section 4.3.8). Young people acknowledged the absence of boys, but the question of whether their presence would have been positive or negative remained unresolved.

> Bella: *It was a bit strange with having all girls, I was expecting there to be a couple of boys just to mix it in. All the girls just … but mind you when it's all girls you can all like talk about whatever you like but when it's a boy you've just got to be careful*.

> Ebony: *Yeah, boys [laughs] … Because there's not even one single boy in there, apart from the adults ... Because it feels a bit weird without boys there, I know boys can be embarrassing and annoying*.

The research evidence on the effects of 'mixed' and 'non-mixed' groupings was also considered in the rapid review, Chapter Five, and as the current knowledge is inconclusive, further work is needed in the area to establish the related potential benefits and/or disadvantages (see section 7.2.5).

6.5 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative data generated in the interviews, focus groups and reflexive diaries. Overall, the data presented illustrated the value of engaging with the arts-based programme for both young people and their foster carers. The following chapter summarises the main findings from phase one and two and offers recommendations for future research and practice.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Introduction

This final chapter begins with a summary of the findings from the phase one rapid review. The qualitative findings are then summarised in relation to how they attended to the key research questions. Lastly, the report offers a series of recommendations for research, practice and future iterations of the programme.

7.2 Phase one: rapid review findings summary

The phase one rapid review was conducted in relation to the research question – 'What is the current knowledge base around arts-based engagement and care-experienced children and young people?' The following sections summarise the phase one findings in relation to this area of inquiry.

7.2.1. Positive impacts on a range of psychosocial outcomes underpinned by a mixed evidence base

Many of the studies reviewed (Gilligan 1999; Hopkins 2004; Coholic et al. 2009; Coholic et al. 2012) reported that the arts and cultural programmes reviewed led to an improvement in stakeholder-reported psychosocial outcomes, such as self-esteem, confidence, emotional literacy, as well as social and cultural capital (Gibson and Edwards 2015; 2016) and relationship-building. A variety of different arts-based methods were incorporated in the studies reviewed, including drama and theatre (Salmon and Rickaby 2014; Nsonwu et al. 2015), painting, drawing, music and play (Lougheed and Coholic 2018), as well as photography, creative writing, puppetry and song-writing (Winter and McAlpine 2011), all of which were found to positively affect at least one of the above psychosocial outcomes.

However, it was not always clear how these studies came to their conclusions; for instance, they were not always fully substantiated by child/young person-centred evaluations. Whilst many of the studies included

adult-reported feedback on the effects of arts-based work, the stronger studies reviewed (see Salmon and Rickaby 2014), included, and focused on, extensive child-centred feedback from the arts activities alongside adult feedback. However, there were studies which arguably focused too heavily on adult reports. Consequently, the extent to which studies looked to evaluate these programmes via child-centred mechanisms differed substantially.

Moreover, not all the studies included in the review were as favourable towards some of the psychosocial benefits to care-experienced children and young people as a result of their participation in arts and cultural projects. For instance, one study reported that their pre-evaluation hypothesis that an arts programme would increase self-efficacy, empowerment, confidence and self-esteem was only partially supported, as these benefits were only realised by some participants. However, this same study found much more positive results for the relationship-building (particularly with care staff, foster families and peers) and development of 'creative, life and social skills' elements of the study (OPM 2013).

The current evidence suggests that arts and cultural engagement programmes are strongest when they focus on drama and theatre elements (Daykin et al. 2008). Whilst Salmon and Rickaby's (2014) qualitative study contributes towards this growing evidence base on the participation of care-experienced children and young people, as the authors acknowledge, they were unable to demonstrate the long-term outcomes due to financial constraints, which led to a lack of follow-up data generation.

7.2.2 Facilitators for a successful programme

More research is required in relation to the programme elements that help sustain participation in the arts. For example, in the OPM (2013) report, the authors acknowledged that they could not make substantiated claims about the effects of the programme on continued participation by care-experienced children and young people due to the fact that participants in the project were already to some degree engaged in the arts before the project commenced. However, notably, in Salmon's and Rickaby's (2014) research, many

participants continued to stay engaged with the project and were offered further arts-based opportunities by the programme facilitators after the project had finished, suggesting an element of longevity and sustainability. Offering positive arts opportunities beyond the programme in question was also viewed to be beneficial by other studies (Hopkins 2004; OPM 2013). Other key facilitators for initial and sustained engagement and participation included the involvement and engagement of foster families or care staff (Winter and McAlpine 2011; Salmon and Rickaby 2014; Gibson and Edwards 2015; 2016). This involvement, particularly from foster families, was also viewed as being positive for participants' confidence and self-esteem (OPM 2013).

Having skilled or professional artists facilitating programmes was viewed to be beneficial for programmes (Winter and McAlpine 2011; OPM 2013), as well in terms of offering multiple arts-based activities within a particular programme (OPM 2013). Focusing on the lived experiences of children and young people from either a mentoring perspective (Gilligan 1999), or through everyday participation (Gibson and Edwards 2015, 2016) were key facilitators for programmes. Participants experiencing peer acceptance was another identified facilitator (Lougheed and Coholic 2018). When programme facilitators could offer financial support for participants to continue in the project, this undoubtedly helped sustain continued participation (Salmon and Rickaby 2014).

7.2.3 Barriers to a successful programme

Engagement in the projects by care staff and foster families was also seen to be a barrier to participation, particularly the potential for inconsistency of communication and contact between programme facilitators and residential care staff (Salmon and Rickaby 2014; Gibson and Edwards 2015; 2016). Other barriers to participation included care-experienced young people's views that it was difficult to maintain engagement with the group in conjunction with a number of other commitments, including the difficulties of staying in contact with biological families and the financial costs of being involved with the programme (Salmon and Rickaby 2014). Gibson and

Edwards (2015; 2016) found that statutory safeguarding procedures could inhibit participation and reinforce perceived differences between those in care and non-care settings. Changes in placement and the transience that this could cause also affected children and young people's participation in arts and culture programmes.

7.2.4 Limitations of the rapid review

It cannot be claimed that this review was 'systematic' in nature, due to it being primarily conducted by one researcher without a second individual screening and monitoring the review process. Despite this, the review has sought to provide as detailed an overview of the current literature as possible from a wide range of sources and by using many different search variations. These were detailed in the Tables in Chapter 4 and Appendix 1. Future studies in this area could increase the rigour of this process by undertaking a full-scale systematic review with several researchers.

Furthermore, this review has not looked to evaluate the included studies in terms of their design quality and/or the reliability of their reported outcomes. Therefore, it could be argued that the study synthesis conducted for this rapid review could be more critical. However, observations regarding the need for more stringent evaluation methodologies and child/young person-centred outcome reporting, particularly the dearth of available knowledge documented in academic papers and reports, as well as the need for this detail in future study reports, is documented in the following section.

7.2.5 Future perspectives for research

Salmon and Rickaby (2014, citing Orme and Salmon 2002) note that one of the current issues with the evidence base around arts and cultural participation of care-experienced children and young people is the lack of robust evaluation studies, particularly evaluations with comparative and/or randomised elements. For some, this makes it difficult to demonstrate whether a programme has genuinely been effective at demonstrating its

intended outcomes. Claims over a lack of robust evidence have also been demonstrated in a recent synthesis of the field. For instance, the review, 'An Investigation into the Impact of Arts and Cultural Education on Children Looked After' (Peeran 2016), noted that there is a lack of scientifically validated studies on the benefits of care-experienced children's and young people's participation in arts and cultural programmes, leading to a dearth of knowledge on whether participation in these projects have substantiated and valid effects on the lives of care-experienced children and young people. Future work could therefore develop the recommendations in this review, as well as build upon the limitations documented in this section.

As well as developing sounder evaluation methodologies, future papers on this topic should foreground participant-centred feedback, as stronger studies have done (for example, Salmon and Rickaby 2014; Nsonwu et al. 2015), because many studies rely on adult-reported feedback. As de Roeper and Savelsberg (2009, p. 223) note, "cultural policies and programmes that recognise and facilitate culturally relevant art forms and the importance attached to them by young people can deliver significant remedial benefits". This was shared by Gibson and Edwards (2015, 2016), who also noted an under-reliance on everyday participation in favour of facilitated participation.

It is suggested that participant-centred feedback can help improve the cultural fit of future arts activities with care-experienced children and young people. Furthermore, from much of the synthesis above it is also clear that, whilst there are many reports of positive effects pertaining to improving a range of psychosocial outcomes in participants, the evidence base is still mixed, and it is argued that this could at least be partially due to the dearth of detailed participant-centred feedback and evaluations and the potential lack of cultural fit that future programmes may suffer from. More research is thus required regarding these elements in future studies.

A couple of the studies reported the perceived benefits of programmes including mixed-age and gender groups (see Hopkins 2004; OPM 2013). However, the evidence base for whether or not having a mixed group of participants who have experienced care and those who have not produces

different results is varied and debatable. For instance, the OPM (2013) report notes that one of the positive elements of the programme was that groups were made up of only those from care-experienced backgrounds, whereas Salmon and Rickaby (2014) reported that having a group of participants from both care and non-care backgrounds was beneficial to the programme, and was advantageous to the development of social networks and the deconstruction of social barriers. Moreover, evaluations of this programme suggested that some of the participants viewed this approach to be less stigmatising and ostracising for participants who had experienced care. Future research should also therefore focus on the debates raised regarding the differing effects of 'mixed' and 'non-mixed' groupings within arts programmes, and whether these either contribute to or mitigate the likelihood of care-experienced participants feeling stigmatised, ostracised or isolated.

7.3 Phase two: qualitative fieldwork findings summary

The key findings from the analysis of the qualitative data will be presented in this section in relation to the research questions, illustrating how the study attended to these key points of inquiry.

7.3.1 *How do foster carers nurture creativity in young people*?

As reported in the data from the focus group with foster carers, time and energy was invested in involving young people in extra-curricular activities. There was not an explicit focus on arts-based or creative projects in all the families, but foster carers reported taking young people to drama classes, dance and gymnastics, which all involve elements of creativity. Foster carers illustrated a high level of commitment to involving young people with extra-curricular opportunities. In relation to the arts programme at the Wales Millennium Centre, foster carers discussed the strategies they employed to encourage young people to attend, and also gave up their own time to be present at the joint sessions and bring young people to the venue, some often travelling a considerable distance. Foster carers also discussed how they had

learnt things from the programme that they would incorporate into their practice with young people in the home.

7.3.2 What cultural forms are valued by care-experienced young people and foster carers and how do they conceptualise value?

Foster carers did not always explicitly discuss activities that would be categorised as arts-based or cultural. However, they were invested in and valued any activities that would engender positive experiences and developmental opportunities for young people. Value was placed on activities that would benefit cognitive skills and support their wider educational trajectories. They also valued involvement with activities that would offer a platform to develop social skills, emotional competencies and build friendships.

Young people enjoyed activities that were fun and enabled them to illustrate their creativity or provide opportunities for them to learn to be creative. Young people also reported growing in confidence, learning new skills, developing social and emotionally competencies, and making new friendships, all of which conferred added value to the arts-based programme.

Specifically, in relation to the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre, foster carers also reported that they valued the opportunity to be with other foster carers, and share advice, experiences and form supportive networks.

7.3.3 What enables care-experienced young people to take part in arts-based activities?

The research data suggests that young people relied on the interest, support and encouragement of foster carers to facilitate their engagement with arts-based activities. This support was both practical, in relation to transport, and emotional in that foster carers actively encouraged participation and demonstrated an interest in young people's activities and achievements.

Additionally, in the arts programme at the Wales Millennium Centre, the visit from War Horse performers and the invitation to one of the shows acted as an incentive for young people to enrol on and attend the programme. The provision of food items such as pizza and cake also incentivised the attendance of some young people, however this was regarded as problematic by foster carers. Ongoing engagement was also encouraged because of an affinity with the facilitators and their skills in creating an inclusive, empowering and enjoyable environment for young people.

In the arts programme at the Wales Millennium Centre, foster carers contended that young people's engagement was promoted by being in a space where other participants were care-experienced. The role of the facilitators was important, and both young people and foster carers were highly complementary of the team delivering the programme, stressing the importance of consistency in relation to Fiona being an active presence in each session. The presence of representatives from The Fostering Network and Action for Children was also appreciated by foster carers who valued the presence of professionals with experience of working with care-experienced young people.

7.3.4 What are the challenges and issues for foster carers in accessing and sustaining relationships with the arts and cultural education?

One of the key challenges raised by foster carers was the reluctance of young people to enrol on and attend arts and cultural opportunities, and extra-curricular activities more widely. In the case of the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre, they were able to overcome this challenge by emphasising the involvement of the War Horse production, and the programme's emphasis on young people in care, which was seen as providing a more inclusive space than programmes that were open to all young people.

Issues were also raised by foster carers and facilitators in relation to barriers of sustainability, as this programme was only a 10-week provision. More widely, issues of cost and transport were also raised by foster carers.

7.3.5 What changes can arts-based organisations make to encourage and sustain relationships with care-experienced young people and their foster families?

Offering activities that do not incur significant costs for foster carers is one way to encourage and sustain engagement with the arts for young people. Consideration could also be given to issues of transport, either by refunding travel costs or offering courses and activities in a wider range of geographical locations. Foster carers also felt that having programmes that were specifically aimed at care-experienced young people was advantageous. Foster carers raised some issues with the provision of catering and felt that they should have a more active role in the planning of future arts programmes and be consulted at the design stage. Facilitators suggested that they would benefit from receiving more training on working with care-experienced young people well in advance of the start date of programmes, and that this training should be available to all the facilitators.

7.4 Post-programme developments

The post-programme interviews with facilitators, young people and foster carers reported a range of key benefits linked to attending the arts-based programme at the Wales Millennium Centre. These were often positioned as having an impact on young people and foster carers beyond the programme. Young people and foster carers also discussed maintaining contact with each other after the programme ended. Additionally, two of the eight young people joined a drama-based activity supported by Wales Millennium Centre, which was open to all young people. This suggests that the programme acted as a springboard for further involvement with the arts.

7.5 Recommendations

The findings from this study generated a range of recommendations for future research and practice.

1. The evidence-base for arts-based interventions with care-experienced young people remains limited. As such, we would recommend that more robust studies are needed to be conducted and that these should include experimental and qualitative designs, and longer-term follow-up with participants.

2. We would recommend that support and investment in systematic reviews of this area is required to generate scientifically robust evaluation. Future studies in this area could improve on the rigour demonstrated in this study by undertaking a full-scale systematic review with several researchers, and by rating included studies in terms of their design quality, reliability of reported outcomes and evaluation rigour.

3. Future studies on this topic should foreground participant-centred feedback from care-experienced young people, as many rely largely on adult-reported feedback. This study drew on the perspectives of foster carers, facilitators and care-experienced young people and this model should be adopted in future work to gain a more nuanced understanding and evaluation of arts-based programmes.

4. This study suggested that a programme aimed at care-experienced young people was advantageous, but that data on the gendered element or age range included in the programme did not offer any firm conclusions. Therefore, future research should focus on the debates raised regarding the differing effects of 'mixed' and 'non-mixed' groupings within arts programmes, and whether these either contribute to or mitigate the likelihood of care-experienced participants feeling stigmatised, ostracised or isolated.

5. This study reported a number of benefits from attending the programme, including improved confidence, social and emotional development, and arts-based skills, which were evidenced in the accounts of young people, foster carers and facilitators. Future

research should adopt a longitudinal approach to explore whether these perceived benefits are transient or have lasting impacts.

6. Future programmes should provide free to access activities for care-experienced young people and explore transitionary pathways into further activities to increase the sustainability of arts interventions.

7. Foster carers reported the value of the involvement of the War Horse production in incentivising care-experienced young people to attend. Future programmes should consider provision and which elements can be included to encourage attendance and completion.

8. Facilitators had mixed views about the value of the Arts Award and the time commitment required to attend to its set requirements. Consideration should be given to whether programmes including an Arts Award should extend the number of sessions to enable the completion of set tasks without detracting from the central aims of the provision.

9. Consideration should be given to the position of the biological children of foster carers and whether places should be offered to them on arts-based programmes for care-experienced young people, particularly when they are close in age to their foster siblings.

10. Future programmes should consider the ways in which arts-based projects can access, engage and include children and young people in care who do not have the support of an 'engaged' foster carer.

11. Facilitators of arts-based programmes aimed at care-experienced young people should be offered specific training for working with children and young people who are in care. It may also be advantageous for facilitators to be supported in sessions by a representative from a relevant third sector organisation, such as The Fostering Network or Action for Children.

12. Consideration should be given to staffing levels. The programme evaluated was attended by two researchers that increased the number of adults available to provide support. The attendance of two researchers was not envisaged in the design process, but they were nevertheless involved in supporting young people. Therefore, future

programmes may require additional staffing or the involvement of volunteers to run effectively.

13. Arts-based programmes aimed at care-experienced young people should ensure that there is consistency with key facilitators across the programme to engender support and stability for participants.

14. Consideration should be given to catering arrangements as care-experienced young people may have a history of problematic relationships with food.

15. Foster carers should be consulted about the specific needs and requirements of the young people they care for in advance of the onset of programmes.

16. The findings of this study suggest that it was useful for foster carers to be actively involved in the initial programme sessions. Future programmes should consider this model in the design process.

17. A steering group of foster carers, care-experienced young people, and experts in the area of care should feed in to the design and planning of future programmes, and considerations about negotiating the endings of programmes and pathways to continue engagement with the arts.

18. Foster carers reported the value gained from having an opportunity to network with other foster carers. Future arts-based programmes aimed at care-experienced young people could consider the provision of a room and refreshments for foster carers to socialise while young people are involved in activities. More widely, consideration should be given to supporting and extending initiatives such as The Fostering Network's Fostering Ambassadors scheme, which offers a forum for foster carers to exchange views, experiences, advice and support.

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Appendix 1 – List of search strings, database searched, and no. of search returns

Scopus

('care-experienced' OR 'looked after' OR 'looked after children' OR 'looked after young people' OR 'looked after adolescents' OR 'children in care' OR 'young people in care') AND ('art*' OR 'culture*') AND ('engagement' OR 'education') = 631 returns

PsycINFO/ASSIA/Sociological Abstracts/Social Care Online

('care-experienced' or 'looked-after children' or 'looked-after young people' or 'looked-after adolescents' or 'looked-after' or 'children in care' or 'young people in care') and ('arts engagement' or 'art-based engagement' or 'art' or 'culture*' or 'cultural engagement' or 'engagement')

      PsycINFO = 25 returns
      ASSIA = 55 returns
      Sociological abstracts = 28 returns
      Social Care Online = 488 returns

Total = 1227; 808 after duplicate removal

Appendix 2: Example Information Sheet and Consent Form

<u>The Value of Cultural and Creative Engagement: Understanding the Experiences and Opinions of Care-experienced Young People and Foster Carers in Wales</u>

<u>Foster Carer and Young People - Project Information</u>

We would like to invite you and your foster child to take part in a research project. It would be interested in your reflections on taking part in the Wales Millennium Centre/The Fostering Network programme each week, and explore your views about the experience of being involved, the possible value and benefits of being engaged with the arts and the potential barriers to participation with the arts and culture. This information sheet explains why the research is being done, and what is involved in taking part. Please read the following information carefully. If you have any questions, please ask.

<u>Why is the research being done?</u>
The aim of this research is to better understand how young people and their foster carers experience arts and culture.

<u>What is involved?</u>
There are three different stages and <u>we will ask for your consent to take part in each of these at different points in the project</u>.

<u>Stage 1</u>: The first stage is looking at and evaluating some of the outputs and activities from the project (such as feedback reflections)
<u>Stage 2</u>: We would like to do a focus group with foster carers at a mid-point in the programme about your views on taking part
<u>Stage 3</u>: Following the end of the project we would like to meet with both you and your foster child for a short interview to discuss your views of taking part in the programme and what you think about the role of art and culture. As well as hearing your suggestions for future activities and programmes.

<u>What will happen to the information?</u>

We will write a report for Wales Millennium Centre and The Fostering Network, and may write further articles, presentations or blogs about the project. This information will help to inform future activities, events and projects for young people and foster carers. All data will be stored securely, in line with the Data Protection Act.

<u>Stage 1</u>: Any other work created by your foster child (such as drawings and feedback reflections) will remain the property of your foster child, but I may ask to take copies of these for use in evaluating the programme. All identifying information will be removed.
<u>Stage 2 and 3</u>: We will audio-record the focus groups and interviews and produce a written record of what is said. This will not contain any information that identifies you, your foster child, or any other people or places.

Confidentiality and safeguarding

We will not repeat anything that is said in the interviews, unless you or your foster child report an incident where someone's well-being is seriously at risk or where significant harm has already occurred. In this case we would follow the safeguarding procedures of Cardiff University. If this happens, we will first discuss it with you and/or your foster child, as appropriate. The research has been given ethical approval by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University.

Does my foster child and I have to take part?

No. It is up to you and your foster child to decide whether or not **they** take part. It is up to you to decide whether or not **you** take part. If you and/or your foster child are happy to take part in the project, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will both be asked to sign a consent form.

Can I decide to withdraw from the study later on?

You or your foster child are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you/they withdraw we will not use the information we have collected from you/them.

Contact details

If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, please feel free to contact us using the following details:
Dawn Mannay mannaydi@cardiff.ac.uk 02920874774
Phil Smith smithpr1@cardiff.ac.uk

If you are happy for yourself and your foster child to take part in the research, please sign the consent form – the parts relevant to you are in blue. Your foster child will also be asked to sign a consent form to take part – the parts relevant to them are in green

Foster Carer Consent Form
Stage 1

If you are happy for yourself and your foster child to take part in **Stage One** of the research project, please fill in and sign the consent form below. Please note that your foster child will only be able to take part in the research if *both you and they* are happy for them to do so, and both give consent.

Please circle YES or NO for each statement, as appropriate

I have read the information sheet.   YES / NO

Someone has explained the project to me.   YES / NO

I understand what the project is about.   YES / NO

I have asked the questions that I want to ask.   YES / NO

I understand that I can choose to take part or not.   YES / NO

I understand that it is up to me and my foster child
to decide whether or not they take part.   YES / NO

I understand that I or my foster child can stop taking part at any time. YES / NO

<u>I agree to take part in the research project.</u>   YES / NO

<u>I agree for my foster child to take part in the research project</u>   YES / NO

SIGNATURE ………………………………………………………………………….

FULL NAME …………………………………………………………………………

DATE …..………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's signature …………………………………………………………

Date……………..………………………………………………..………………

Young Person Consent Form
Stage 1

If you are happy to take part in **<u>Stage One</u>** of the research project, please fill in and sign the consent form below. If you have any questions, please ask.

Please circle 'YES' or 'NO' for each statement

I have read the information sheet.   **YES / NO**

Someone has explained the project to me.   **YES / NO**

I have had the chance to talk about the project with an adult.   **YES / NO**

I understand what the project is about.   **YES / NO**

I have asked any questions that I want to ask.   **YES / NO**

I understand that I can choose to take part or not.   **YES / NO**

I understand that I can stop taking part at any time.   **YES / NO**

I agree that work that I produce as part of the project (such as drawings) can be used in published work in the future.   **YES / NO**

<u>I agree to take part in the research project.</u>   **YES / NO**

FULL NAME ……………………………………………………………………

DATE ……….……………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's signature …………………………………………………………

Date………………………………………………………....……….…..……………

Appendix 3 – Foster Carers Focus Group Questions

1. How did you find out about the programme?
2. Why did you decide to come?
3. Have you taken part in other programs events?
4. Are there barriers to taking part in some events? (foster siblings, cost, travel)
5. What have you liked about the program?
6. What have your foster children/children enjoyed?
7. Are there any parts that your foster children/children didn't like?
8. What do you think the benefits are of being involved – have you noticed any changes in your foster children/children?
9. What would you change?
10. What do you think The Fostering Network and the Wales Millennium Centre should offer in the future?

Appendix 4 – Facilitators' Focus Group Questions

In advance facilitators were asked to draw/write something representing:

1) What they hoped the project would achieve

2) Changes they have observed, in either the group as a whole or individual young people.

Warm up: who you are, your role on the programme

Metaphor 1: What did you hope the programme would achieve?

Exploring the metaphors chosen – Why did you choose this? What does it represent? Did you consider any others?

Positive/negative aspects of the programme and suggested changes

- What activities or aspects of the programme worked well, in relation to the hopes/aims just mentioned, or otherwise?
- What activities or aspects of the programme didn't work well, from your point of view? Why? What was difficult/unsuccessful? How could this be changed?
- Were there changes you made to the project along the way – (how/why) did it evolve?
- What changes would you make / what information would you pass on to someone running this project in future?
- What do you think the young people gained from being involved in the project? (How do you know this – from asking them, observing?)
- What about wider impacts/gains – for example, for other family members?
- Can you tell me a bit about the Arts Award that took place as part of the project? What was positive and negative about including that as part of the programme – what worked, what didn't work so well, what would you change?

Metaphor 2:

What changes have you observed over the course of the project, either in individuals or the group as a whole?

Exploring the metaphors chosen – Why did you choose this? What does it represent? Did you consider any others?

What has been the most positive change you noted?

Were there any negative changes that you noted?

Finish up

Are there any other aspects of the programme that we haven't talked about, any things you learnt from delivering it, that could help make the project better if it was run in future?

Any other points?

Appendix 5 - Checklist of interview questions for young people and foster carers

1. What did you enjoy about the project?
2. What did you learn from the project?
3. Can you see any changes in yourself and/or others?
4. Are you going to keep in contact with anyone?
5. Did you have any existing/previous hobbies before the project? If so, what are they?
6. Do you have any plans to do more arts-based activities in the future?
7. Was there anything that you didn't you like?
8. Is there anything that could be improved or changed?
9. What has the programme meant to you?
10. How would you explain the project to someone else who was thinking of taking part?