

Acting for the Future

Creative Arts for Health and Well-Being

An Arts Intervention by Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality

SUMMARY EVIDENCE-BASED REPORT & EVALUATION

Prepared by

Niamh Clowry

SMASHING TIMES INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
FOR THE ARTS AND EQUALITY

and

Dr Charlotte Wilson

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY,
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN



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Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin



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Acting for the Future

Creative Arts for Health and Well-Being



The award-winning Acting for the Future uses specifically designed participative arts-based workshops, professional theatre performances, film screenings and post-show panel discussions with counsellors and clinical psychologists to promote active healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention. The project is implemented by Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality in partnership with the Samaritans and with assistance from a panel of advisors and is delivered on an annual basis in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland with second level schools, universities and with a range of diverse youth and adult groups and the general public. This project was initially set up in 2005 and runs on a yearly basis due to demand for service.

The project reaches over

10,000

young people & adults annually





"Promotes active healthy lifestyles and positive mental health and well-being through creative processes"

Acting for the Future comprises three main elements: firstly, participative art-based workshops for young people and adults; secondly, performances of original plays or film screenings which are presented and then followed by a post-show panel discussion with counsellors, psychologists and invited guest speakers from the Samaritans and other organisations; and, in keeping with best practice, the third element is a full support structure put in place for all events.

The programme uses a variety of fun, experiential and interactive art and discussion-based methodologies as well as counselling and support services to develop learning in relation to the importance of maintaining active healthy lifestyles and looking after your positive mental health and well-being.

The creative workshops and events are devel-



Support Structure

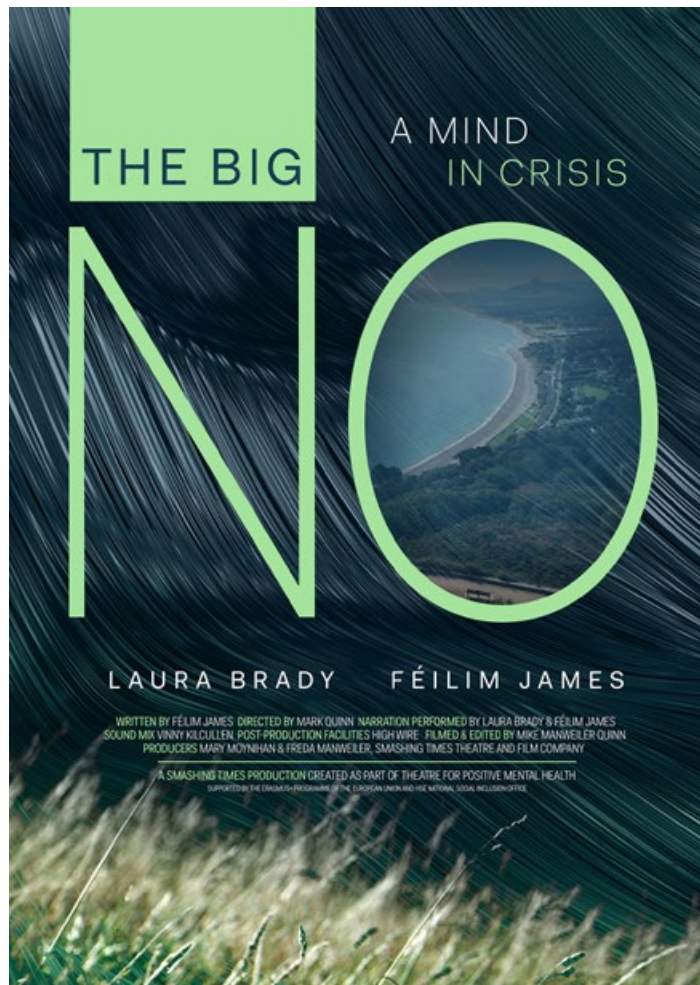
In keeping with best practice, a support structure is in place for all activities. A representative from Smashing Times meets with participating groups to discuss key elements and an information pack containing resource material for follow-up work and Information Leaflets on Positive Mental Health and Suicide Prevention are distributed after each event. The work is conducted by trained facilitators working with qualified counsellors and uses interactive, accessible arts-based methodologies to develop learning in relation to the importance of looking after our physical and emotional health and well-being. The

project uses creative processes to promote active healthy lifestyles, emotional resilience and coping skills, positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention. The methodologies are highly accessible and have a high success rate for working successfully with communities experiencing marginalisation. As part of this project young people and adults develop a stronger awareness of key issues through a quality arts experience.

Development

In 2018 Smashing Times expanded Acting for the Future: Theatre for Positive Mental Health to bring together the skills and expertise of five partner organisations from across Europe, supported by Erasmus+. Artists and educators from across Europe came together to share good practice and collaboratively create a new Europe wide arts-based module using creative processes of theatre and film to promote positive mental health and well-being with a focus on coping skills for stress and anxiety.

The Big No by award-winning writer Féilim James.



oped by lead artist Mary Moynihan in partnership with, and with advice from Joan Freeman, founder of Pieta House, Eimear Burke, Counselling Psychologist, Karen Ward, Clinical Psychotherapist and with input from a range of artist facilitators.

Professional theatre and film performances include the highly acclaimed *Testimonies* by Mary Moynihan and Paul Kennedy and *The Big No* by award-winning writer Féilim James.

'Smashing Times... has a deserved reputation for exploring social issues with sensitivity and in depth... the plays are true theatre, reaching out and embracing their listeners.' *The Irish Times*

'Fascinating, executed by the innovative and dynamic Smashing Time' *Sunday Independent*

In 2019, Smashing Times adapted Acting for the Future for working in intercultural health care contexts. A sustained model of practice was developed with support from the HSE National Social Inclusion Office and Dormant Accounts Fund and the programme has been implemented successfully to date with diverse communities including refugees, asylum seekers and with Travellers and Roma.

On the back of the success of the pilot project (2018-2019), we conducted a second phase in 2020-2021 and Smashing Times continue to work with refugees, asylum seekers and with Travellers and Roma. Project activities include an outreach campaign, theatre workshops, research, the development of information leaflets and a Smashing Times Arts-Based Toolkit for using creative processes to promote intercultural health and well-



L to R: Andrew Hetherington, Chief Executive, Business to Arts; Minister Paschal Donohoe, TD, Minister for Finance; Mary Moynihan, Writer, Theatre and Film Maker and Artistic Director, Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality; Daire Murphy, Director, Dublin Samaritans and Paul O'Kane, Chief Communications Officer, Dublin Airport Authority (Daa)

being with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Participants have access to a quality arts experience creating a safe and welcoming space and a fun and engaging way to explore positive mental health and active healthy lifestyles.

Successes

Acting for the Future is implemented by Smashing Times in partnership with the Samaritans and is endorsed by a range of individuals and organisations including Joan Freeman, the founder of Pieta House. The presence of professionals from the

field of mental health during programme activities, the quality of the work and its success with young people and adults are what make this project an example of best practice, as evaluated by Arklow Youth Mental Health Week.

An independent evaluation stated that the project was 'an example of 'Best Practice' in how it was organized and delivered' and 'The overall feedback was that Smashing Times was the most positively evaluated of all events, deeming it as an example of very good practice!' - Barbara Duffy, HSE, Arklow

SMASHING TIMES AND THE SAMARITANS were honoured to be awarded the DAA Arts Award at the Allianz Business to Arts Award Ceremony at Board Gáis Energy Theatre, Dublin presented by Pascal Donohoe TD, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

The company are the recipients of a GSK Ireland Impact Award, a Dublin Bus Community Spirit Award and a National Lottery Good Cause Award. These awards are a special recognition for the power of the arts in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

In April 2021, Acting for the Future - Creative Arts for Health and Well-Being, was selected as the overall winner of the #ArtsAgainstCovid Awards by the Arts in Health International Foundation.



Awards
#ArtsAgainstCovid



Mental Health Week. Maeve Ingoldsby, writer and playwright, described the project as ‘theatre-in-education at its best’. The Irish Times writes that ‘Smashing Times . . . has a deserved reputation for exploring social issues with sensitivity and in depth.’

According to a student attending the workshops and performances, ‘I always knew promotion of mental health was important but now I believe that it should be promoted even more, and more workshops and performances like this should be available for everyone’. According to another student, ‘Today I felt that I discovered things about mental health that I didn’t previously know. I felt it was a very fulfilling and enlightening experience’ and ‘more workshops and performances like this should be available for everyone’. According to the Samaritans, ‘Smashing Times has created something unique that captures audience attention immediately by its relevance to society and young people’.

Impacts

- Provides access to a quality arts experience for young people and adults using creative processes to promote active healthy lifestyles and positive health and well-being
- Engages young people and adults directly in a fun and accessible manner, making the arts accessible to schools and communities and raises awareness of positive mental health through creative processes and what can be done to maintain it
- Increases physical activity and raises awareness of how to maintain active healthy lifestyles, how to keep fit and healthy and the importance of looking after your physical health and how this can support positive mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Provides compassionate, innovative and creative group work, and direct counselling services
- Provides access to emotional engagement with the issue which creates a high level of understanding as young people and adults work through the issues in a safe environment
- Engages participants in how to build emotional strength and how to recognise and deal with causes of stress and other factors that may lead to mental health difficulties
- Raises awareness of the importance of developing positive coping strategies and ways to handle stress so participants can better deal with difficulties that can arise in life. Participants learn about coping strategies and the ability to solve problems and to adapt to mental stresses in life, all of which promote emotional wellbeing and positive mental health.

- Promotes resilience and well-being into the future through creative, fun and engaging processes
- Provides opportunity to engage in an open, supportive discussion on the issues of mental health and suicide prevention. Reduces stigma surrounding mental health problems by opening up discussion in a safe and supportive environment with counsellors, the Samaritans and invited guest speakers
- Promotes improved vocabulary and communications skills, for individuals, which can increase self-confidence and self-esteem, supporting participants to express voices, views and solutions
- A positive and lasting impact on mental healthcare and the health of communities around Ireland

In relation to suicide prevention, the programme:

- Raises awareness of suicide prevention in a practical and supportive way
- Provides learning in relation to where to seek help and how to access resource services for positive mental health and suicide prevention
- For adults, the programme raises awareness of how to recognise the signs and symptoms of suicide and how to respond, and for young people the workshop provides guidance on and promotes the importance of contacting a responsible adult if someone is talking about taking their own life.
- Provides access to information on support services for positive mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention
- Provides opportunity to speak privately with a counsellor immediately after the workshop to discuss issues related to mental health
- Imparts knowledge on how to engage sensitively with others when experiencing emotional distress and suicidal difficulties.

Follow-up reports with secondary school students prove that attitudes towards mental health and suicide changed due to the openness and non-judgemental learning atmosphere created. As a result of the workshops, a number of students have approached designated counsellors to seek professional help.

Acting for the Future also gave some students the opportunity to see a live dramatic performance for the first time. This project is innovative in that it uses drama and theatre as artistic and creative processes in their own right and makes use of those processes to raise awareness of specific issues. Young people and adults have access to a quality arts experience while developing a strong awareness of the issues explored.

Programme Highlights

- 95% of participants who completed evidence based evaluation questionnaire stated that their awareness of issues surrounding positive mental health and well-being has increased as a result of attendance at the Smashing Times Acting for the Future programme
- Participants have raised awareness and access to information on how to look after your positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention
- Access to a quality arts experience creating a welcoming space and a fun, engaging way to explore active healthy lifestyles, and positive mental health and well-being
- Sensitive and supportive environment created to raise awareness of how to look after your positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention
- Innovative arts-based toolkit developed, consisting of a range of theatre and arts-based workshop models and resource tools suitable for practitioners using creative processes of theatre, film, art, literature and digital arts to promote positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention. Tools include a range of participative theatre, storytelling and arts-based workshop models, a series of monologues for performance, short films, guidelines on best-practice for Facilitators using arts based processes to promote positive mental health and well-being and a range of information and resource leaflets
- Workshops, performances, film screenings and panel discussions suitable for a range of communities and communities of interest including schools, youth and community groups, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, ethnic minority communities, Travellers, and Roma
- Work ideally suited for groups experiencing disadvantage or marginalization due to the accessible, inclusive, engaging and supportive nature of the methodologies employed



Smashing Times and members of the Samaritans, winners of the DAA Business to Arts Award 2017



Sabina Coyne Higgins




Endorsements

QUOTATION	PARTICIPANT
<i>'This work is excellent, we don't do enough emotional training and that is why drama is so important, particularly for young people in schools.'</i>	2nd level student, St Paul's CBS, North Brunswick Street, Dublin
<i>'This work is so powerful, I wish there was more of this in schools.'</i>	Secondary School Teacher, CBS Westland Row, Dublin
<i>'Creative activities are a great way of getting the young people involved working together and gaining an understanding of mental health issues. We would like to continue our involvement with Smashing Times.'</i>	School Councillor, Blakestown Community School, Blanchardstown, Dublin
<i>'So many people have come to the school, tried to talk to us about mental health problems, drinking problems; you've summed it up in an hour and a half, and that's impressive.'</i>	2nd level student, Blakestown Community School, Blanchardstown, Dublin
<i>'It was an excellent introduction to positive well-being and suicide prevention. It is something I would like to see discussed more in schools.'</i>	2nd level student, St Paul's CBS, North Brunswick Street, Dublin
<i>'Before this, no piece of theatre ever made me feel an emotion so strong that I've felt I needed to immediately express it, I was speechless.'</i>	2nd level student, CBS Westland Row, Dublin
<i>'The use of drama and discussion was a brilliant way to get everyone involved.'</i>	2nd level student, Stanhope Street Secondary school, Dublin
<i>'Every student in the country should be able to avail of this workshop.'</i>	3rd level student, University College Dublin
<i>'I was a bit hesitant when I heard about the subject matter. However, Smashing Times Theatre Company deliver honest and thought-provoking pieces. I see how important it is to discuss and not shy away from.'</i>	3rd level student, University College Dublin
<i>'The games and exercises were so useful and it was fun to do something different. I'd love to do more in the future.'</i>	Participant, TravAct, Northside Traveller Support Group
<i>'I find art very, very relaxing, and I find it takes your mind off of everything, your just there and you have this blank canvas when you are doing the physical act and it just calms you down and just re-fixes you if you know what I mean.'</i>	Participant, Kildare Traveller Action
<i>'I did the workshop and I thought it was brilliant.'</i>	Participant, Kildare Traveller Action
<i>'Release of stress, good laugh, better than counselling!'</i>	Participant, Kildare Traveller Action
<i>'I can say a very good experience, very positive . . . very positive for all of our participants'.</i>	Director, Musicantia Roma Culture and Educational Centre



Acting for the Future

**Evidence-Based
Research and
Evaluation by Trinity
College Dublin**



Acting for the Future is evaluated on an annual basis. An independent evaluation of Acting for the Future by Arklow Mental Health Week described the programme as ‘An example of ‘best practice’ in how it was organized and delivered’. Evaluations regularly show the large-scale reach of Acting for the Future, a high level of participation engagement and the success of the work in raising awareness of how to look after and promote positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention.

In 2017, Dr Charlotte Wilson, Assistant Professor in Clinical Psychology, School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin, began working with Smashing Times, conducting evidence-based research and evaluations on the Acting for the Future programme. This focused on a number of outcomes that were felt to be relevant to the aims of the programme, including reducing mental health stigma, increasing mental health help seeking attitudes, improving overall well-being, and increased connection with peers and community.

We are interested in how Acting for the Future impacts on people’s understanding of mental health issues including their knowledge about how and where to ask for help, and their own willingness to ask for help when they need it.

The structure and content of the evaluation forms were created by TCD, distributed by the facilitators at the activities, and then returned to TCD for analysis.

The evidence-based research is collated from participants as follows:

1

An evidence-based research letter and consent form is given to each participant who will attend the Workshop/Performance

2

We ask every person who takes part whether they would be willing to complete a series of questions before they take part, and then again after to see whether their knowledge about mental health increases and to see whether they feel differently about asking for help in the future should they need it. An 'Evaluation Questionnaire for Participants attending Smashing Times Acting for the Future Programme' is distributed to each participant. This is a pre-workshop form and a post-workshop form distributed to each participant at the beginning and end of each workshop series.

3

We distribute a Smashing Times evaluation form to critically examine feedback on the project from participants as part of the evidence-based research. This includes feedback from participants in relation to future needs.

4

The project coordinator liaises with the contact for each school, university and community group to conduct verbal feedback, which is then documented.

5

When we get the answer booklets we assign a numerical code and use this to enter their data into the computer. We keep the hard copy of the booklet safe in a locked filing cabinet at Smashing Times. When we have all the data we will write a final report with our findings. Data is confidential, except when we have reason to believe that someone might be at risk of harm, or if the data could be needed as part of a Garda investigation. Under the Freedom of Information Act participants have the right to get a copy of their data.



EVIDENCE-BASED EVALUATIONS - METHODOLOGY

The evaluation strategy takes a pragmatic, mixed methods approach. It takes a pragmatic approach to ensure that the maximum number of participants will complete the evaluation, minimising the known biases in collecting data as part of interventions that happen in everyday practice. Thus the mixed methods approach includes collecting pre-post quantitative measures with qualitative post-workshop evaluation. A number of key variables are measured for each participant prior to the workshop and again after the workshop.

This allows the changes that occur from before to after the intervention to be calculated. The mixed method approach also involves collecting qualitative data through open ended questions on the post-workshop evaluation, and where resources are available, through interviews or focus groups with participants who are willing to speak about their experiences. This qualitative data allows the researchers to explore the acceptability of the workshop, but also to explore the psychological mechanisms of change. Mixed methods approaches are particularly suited for real-life complex research problems as they are able to address the research question more comprehensively than single method approaches, partly by being both deductive and inductive.

The variables measured in Acting for the Future reflect the constructs that the workshop aims to change. These include Mental Health Literacy (Mental Health Literacy Scale), Emotional Self-Efficacy (Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale), Quality of Life/Well-being (Quality of Life Scale) and connectedness.

1

Evidence-Based Evaluation with Second Level Schools

A large-scale evidence-based evaluation of the Acting for the Future programme in second level schools, involving over 700 young people, was completed in November 2020, finding significant changes in mental health seeking behaviours, increased confidence in emotional regulation strategies for self-care and the care of others, with significant changes in stigma attitudes and well-being. The evaluation period was the academic year 2018 to 2019 and 16 schools and colleges took part.

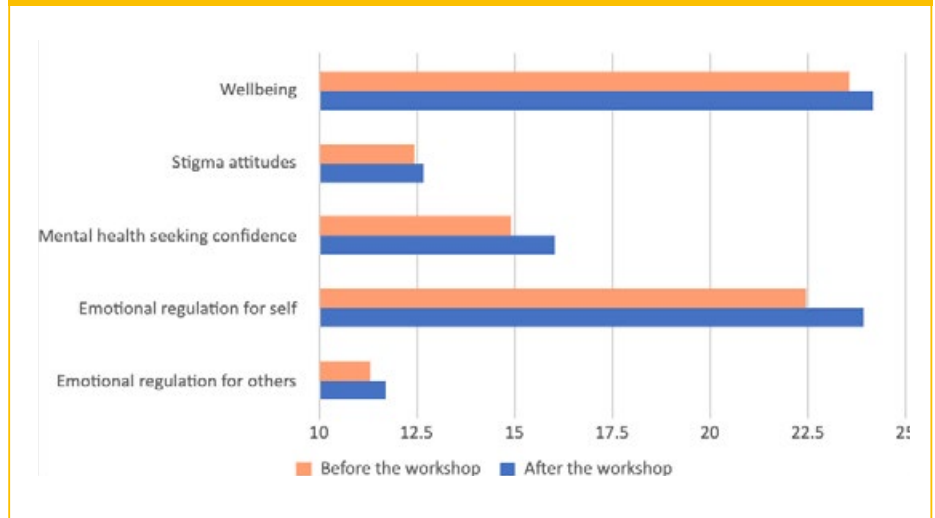
In undertaking a formal evaluation of the 'Acting for the Future' workshop it was important to determine what the key mechanisms of change were.

The five pillars of evaluation were therefore

- student well-being
- stigma attitudes
- mental health seeking confidence
- emotion regulation strategies

The questionnaire scores for the young people prior to taking part in the project give us a good snapshot as to the well-being of young people across Ireland.

Changes in scores before and after the workshop



Wellbeing

Scores on the wellbeing questions ranged from 3 to 30. The average score was 23.6, suggested that overall the students wellbeing was high.

Stigma attitudes

The scores on the stigma attitudes questions ranged from 2 to 15 with high scores representing low levels of stigma or positive attitudes. The average was 12, with 43% of participants scoring 14 or 15, with only 15% scoring under the mid-point on the scale. This suggests that most young people did not hold negative beliefs about people with mental health difficulties.

Mental health seeking confidence

Scores ranged from 4 to 20 for mental health seeking confidence. The average score was 14.9. This is also positive, as it suggests that many children are quite or very confident about seeking help for their mental health should they need it.

Emotion regulation strategies for self

Seven of the 10 items on the questionnaire were about managing your own emotions. The range of scores was from 5 to 35, with an average score of 22.3. This suggests that young people have some confidence in managing their emotions. However, it is notable that this average is much lower than for the other measures.

Emotion regulation strategies for others

Three of the 10 items on the questionnaire were about helping others manage their emotions. The range was therefore smaller; from 3 to 15, with the average score being 11.3. This is closer to the highest score possible, suggesting that young people were more confident in their ability to help a friend with their emotions, compared to how confident they feel managing their own emotions.

Conclusions – Success of Work in Schools

Overall, the young people's scores prior to undertaking the Acting for the Future program suggest that young people are doing well in life. They are feeling connected, they are confident about seeking help for their mental health, and they do not hold many negative attitudes towards people with mental health difficulties. In contrast young people are not feeling as confident in managing their own emotions.

Nearly all of the domains showed improvements from before to after the program delivery. The largest change was for mental health seeking confidence, with good changes on emotional regulation for self and for others. Smaller, but statistically significant changes were found for stigma attitudes and wellbeing.

The overall evaluation of the research clearly showed that the principles of the Acting for the Future are working at a very high level. Most of the changes the work seeks to address did significantly change. This included students' wellbeing, their stigma attitudes, their mental health help seeking confidence, their confidence in their ability to manage their own emotions and their ability to manage the emotions of others.

In addition to the feedback gained in previous evaluations, quotes from participants, and the behaviours of teachers who invite Smashing Times back each year to repeat the program, we believe that these results show that the Acting for the Future program is having a significantly positive effect on young people.

Acting for the Future increases young people's confidence in mental health seeking behaviour, well-being, and emotional regulation strategies.

2

Evidence-based Evaluation with Refugee Centres

Acting for the Future: Theatre for Positive Mental Health. Using the arts to promote Intercultural Health with Refugees in Ireland

Smashing Times were supported by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office to set up a unique one-year pilot project using the arts to promote Intercultural Health and social inclusion with Refugees in Ireland. The project used participative theatre-based workshops and creative processes to promote positive mental health and social inclusion with refugees from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and was delivered in the Republic of Ireland with refugees in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs). The pilot project ran for one year from March 2018 to March 2019. Sixteen workshops were conducted with 76 refugees at EROC centres in Roscommon, Waterford and Meath using creative processes to promote positive mental health and well-being. The work promotes an intercultural approach to delivery of health care support services in an equal, accessible and effective way, acknowledging and valuing the diversity of all service users.

Arts-Based Toolkit

The project resulted in the design of an Arts-Based Toolkit for using creative processes to promote intercultural health and well-being with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The toolkit contains guidelines for facilitators and a curriculum for a theatre-based workshop model suitable for intercultural health care workers, artists, teachers and facilitators working in intercultural healthcare contexts and can be implemented with refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and ethnic minority communities to promote positive mental health and well-being. The workshop model was developed from the series of pilot workshops conducted with refugees in three Emergency Reception and Orientation centres (EROC's) and from feedback sessions conducted with participants to identify the needs of refugees in relation to promoting positive mental health and well-being.

Evaluation

Participants were asked seven questions about their knowledge and understanding of positive mental health, their knowledge of coping strategies and information about mental health, confidence in talking about it and their belief that the arts can help all of these factors.

Participants rated each item out of five, where one represented a score of 'not at all', three was a score of 'somewhat' and five was 'very well', before and after their participation in the workshops. Change was calculated in each participant's score.

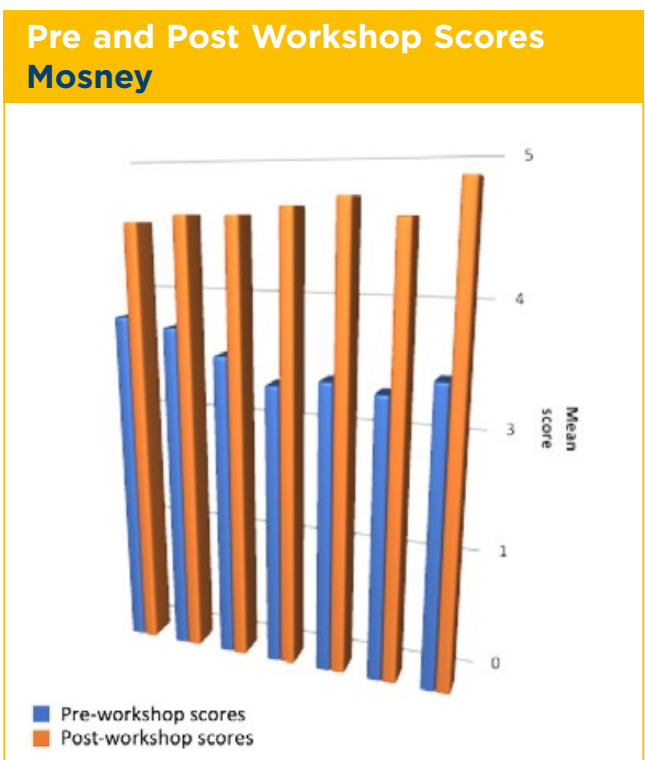
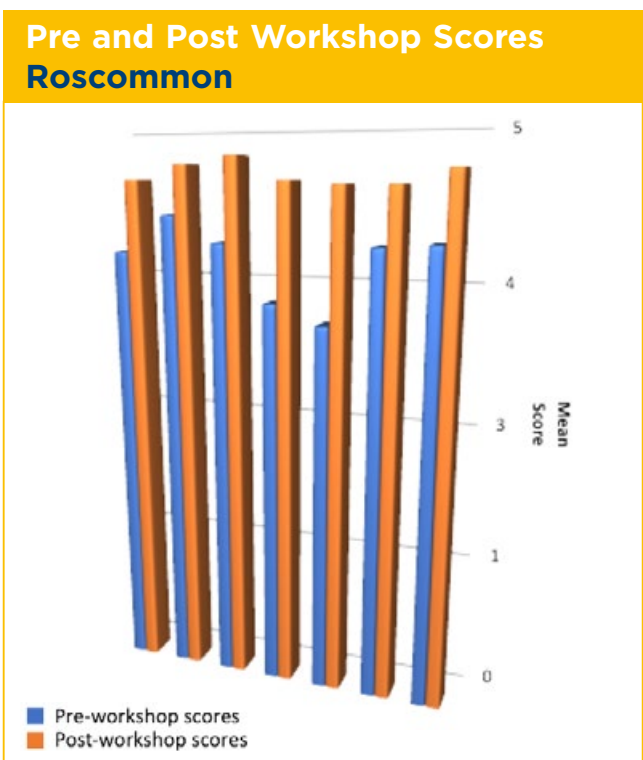


Exclusion, discrimination and hate crime may impact on positive mental health and well-being

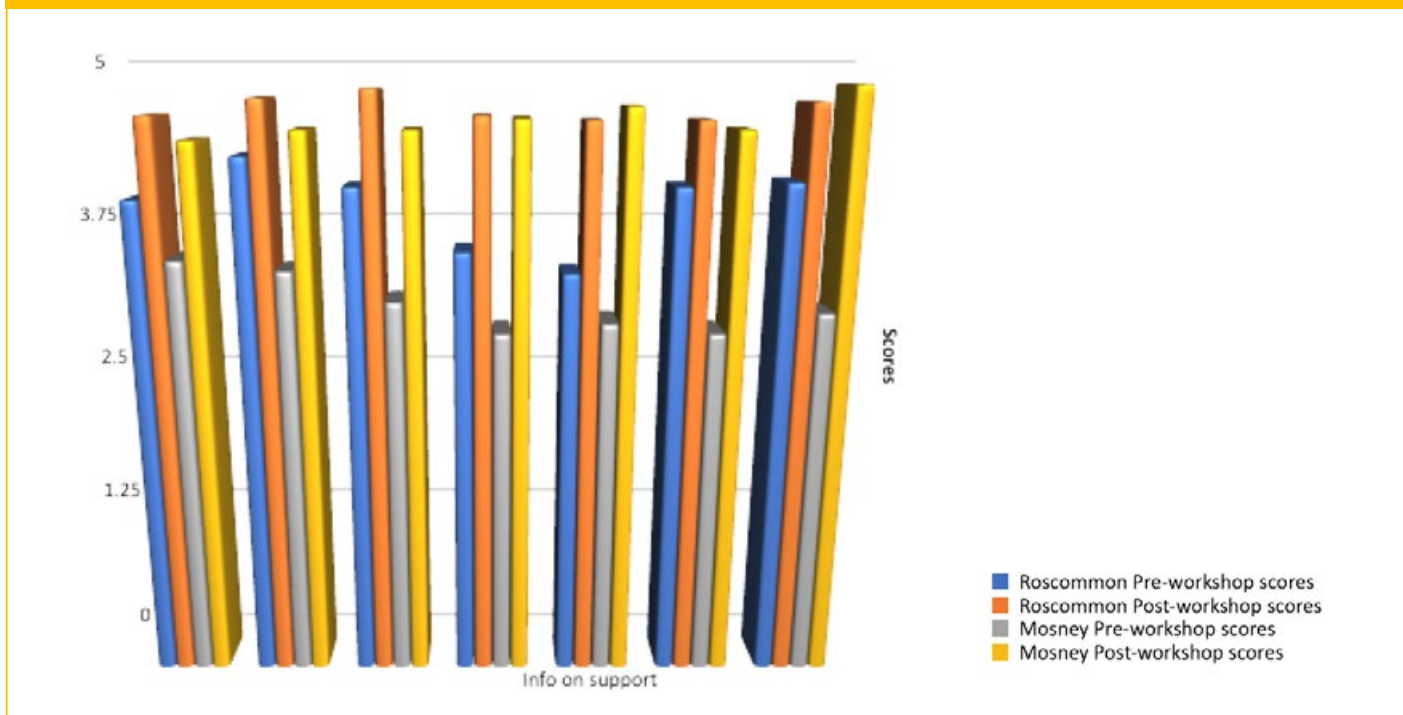
Conclusions of Evidence-based Evaluation with Refugee Centres

Participants' mean scores after both workshop programmes were above 4.5 out of 5, suggesting that participants left the workshops with very high levels of knowledge and confidence in understanding and talking about positive mental health.

The workshops all led to increases in scores across all questions, with some domains demonstrating larger changes than others. Strongest change was seen in knowledge of coping strategies for handling stress, and for knowledge of support services for mental health, with each of these changing by over one point, or 20%.



Pre and Post Workshop Scores - Collated



Feedback on Acting for the Future Programme in EROC, Roscommon

The workshops with refugees in the EROC centre in Roscommon were conducted by Jenny Macdonald, theatre facilitator and Eimear Burke, psychologist and the following is feedback presented by the facilitators.

The workshops were considered a great success based on feedback from the participants and from the representatives from the centre itself. This group was a mixed group of men and women. There was a core group who attended all workshops and then a number of men and women who attended only some of the sessions. This was due to participants having to leave the group because they had been assigned a house and due to parents with young children having to leave early as they had to collect their children from the creche. A number of the workshops had to start after the appointed time due to participants arriving late or interruptions happening that were unavoidable.

The men engaged freely from the beginning while the women seemed more reserved and self-conscious initially due in part to cultural differences where mixing freely with men outside of their own family was not encouraged. This is a cultural issue. According to the counselling psychotherapist Eimear Burke

‘for example, there were two sisters and their mother for whom this was the first activity they had engaged in since coming to the centre 18 months previously. Initially I began to question the wisdom in having the participants mixed. I thought the women would be able to engage more freely if they were on their own. However, by the fifth week the women engaged more with the men and were less self-conscious. This I think was a good experience for the women

to help prepare them for living in Irish culture where there is no gender segregation.’

Language was a key consideration as most of the participants spoke very little English and an interpreter was required. Using an interpreter is essential and time needs to be allocated to allow for this . . . the model is adaptable and the facilitator will have to choose what exercises most benefit the group according to the time available.

The current workshops were two hours each with a total of five workshops conducted. These workshops proved highly successful, however feedback recommends an increase in the number of workshops to eight to allow for a more in-depth exploration of key issues. Three to five sessions can be used to pass on information on positive mental health and well-being and an additional three workshops can be used to develop improvisation work which aids language learning as well as providing the forum for a more in-depth exploration of key issues.

Building relations with key members of staff already in the Refugee centre and who are involved in looking after the refugees is essential. Each group of refugees may already have a teacher or facilitator working with them through the centre and it is recommended to have this person present for the workshops and to take part in the workshops, particularly if they already have a good relationship with the participants. They can offer useful advice and feedback and encourage the participants to attend. For example in Roscommon, two support teachers were Shereen and Neil and ‘they offered useful advice and feedback and were a great resource as they have a good relationship with participants’. Smashing Times would particularly like to thank Shireen and Neil who were involved with the centre and attended the workshops.

According to Eimear Burke, counselling psychologist:

It took some time to build up trust in the group. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the group were mixed gender, secondly because of language barriers and thirdly we did not fully know the backgrounds of the participants. Although the participants may now be out of any dangerous situations they were previously in, however they are still not in a stable life situation. This can only begin to happen when they have a secure home. Normally when running Acting for the Future in Irish schools, we are notified of any concerns related to the participants prior to the workshop taking place, for example if someone has been affected by suicide. This information was not always available when working with the centres. Again, in the Acting for the Future programme in schools, we are working with participants who have a stable life situation (I'm referring to basic needs like security) and so it is easier to address the issue of suicide prevention.

Another key consideration is the fact that refugees may not be comfortable discussing not only suicide prevention but also, they may be hesitant to discuss the actual theme of positive mental health. According to the counsellor 'We were told that if we had introduced the notion of Mental Health at the beginning, very few would have attended'. As a result of this knowledge, Smashing Times adapted the workshop process whereby the facilitators spent time doing fun exercises that worked on bonding the group and building trust. And then we gradually introduced the topic of positive mental health and well-being how to look after yourself in terms of handling stress and having support structures in place.

According to the counselling psychologist Eimear Burke 'participants were very appreciative of the sessions. Some commented on the fact that these were the first opportunities they had to get to know each other, to share their names and stories. Participants were very welcoming and overall engaged with the sessions and the overall atmosphere in the centre was very welcoming and hospitable'.



Evaluation Feedback from Participants

QUOTATION	PARTICIPANT
<i>'I loved the workshops and all the exercises. It was a fun way of spending time in a group. . . overall the workshops have been so positive in how we did the work and the safe space they created for us.'</i>	Refugee Participant, EROC Roscommon
<i>'The skills I have learned have already helped me as I find my place here in Ireland and I know I will use what I have learned in the future. We have loved meeting you and having fun through the work as well. Thank you so much'.</i>	Refugee Participant, EROC Roscommon

Feedback on Programme in Mosney Accommodation Centre

The workshops with refugees in the Mosney centre were conducted by Charlotte Tiernan, theatre facilitator and Gerry Mc Nevin, counsellor and the following is feedback presented by the facilitators.

Overall Smashing Times had a very positive experience working with this group. The group in Mosney were a women's group, we had the same women give or take one or two, with several different languages in the group. A key aim was to get the group to connect with each other and this happened through the workshop process. There was great solidarity developed within this group by the end of the workshops.

A number of the women have very young children. There was a creche available however there seemed to be huge anxiety around leaving the children and a number of women did not want to leave the children. There was some space within the workshop room for the children to play however more work can be done to encourage the women to have time and space to themselves and to make full use of the creche.

Language was a key consideration. As already stated, were several different languages in the group which meant the work takes place at a slower level as time is needed for different translations. We worked around this by repeating games on a weekly basis so as to not take up too much time explaining new



games. Repeating games that the group like always works well and the games are designed in such a way to allow for repeat playing. We carried out a number of games that can be easily 'demonstrated' rather than having a lengthy explanation or introduction. Exercises such as 'Choose One to Eight' or 'Mirror's' are easy to explain through 'demonstration'. The workshop may often seem slightly 'chaotic' due to the different activities taking place combined with different issues coming up however the medium of drama is very malleable and can adapt to suit the group's needs.

We gave out certificates of attendance at the end and this worked very well as the women really enjoyed receiving the certificates of attendance at a final ceremony. The women were delighted with the certificates as it was something to take away from the series of workshops.

The following is from Charlotte Tiernan, the drama facilitator who conducted the workshops in Mosney:

'I had a very positive experience of the project. I found working with psychotherapist to be really effective. Drama lends itself well to exploring positive mental health in a fictional context but the presence of a psychotherapist allowed a valuable and safe space for reflection - observations could often be then directly related to the participants own world. I think the workshops benefited greatly from the relaxation and meditation exercises facilitated by the psychotherapist. The participants identified 'finding a space for themselves' as key to promoting positive mental health.

As a participant group the women were warm, friendly and engaged very well in the dramatic material. In the first workshop they listed 'fun and getting to know each other better' as two of their priorities for workshops to come. They acknowledged that support with these two issues was important to them in regards to promoting their positive mental health. Throughout the workshops we maintained a person-centered approach to the drama material we presented to them. They appeared to really connect with the character we developed and the story with created. Each week they chose to return to this and we respected that choice. In discussion their reflection on positive mental health was often related to character and story as well as their own lives. They appeared to also really enjoy the drama games played in the early stages of the workshop therefore we presented them with a number of different games over the course of the workshops. It was suggested that they continue to play these types and games at the start of their own women's group each week.

Evaluation Feedback from Participants

In relation to the Acting for the Future: Theatre for Positive Mental Health workshop programme conducted in Mosney Accommodation Centre, the following feedback was given by the participants. A total of thirteen participants completed an evaluation form.

Participants were asked to tick a box to indicate what they felt was the standard of the drama workshop presentation. The response was: Fair: 0, Very good: 0, Excellent: 13.

QUOTATION	PARTICIPANT
<i>We pass lovely time. Hope to see you again.'</i>	Myriem
<i>'We just love you and I want to see you soon.'</i>	Marwa
<i>'Really enjoyed the class. We had lots of fun and we got to know each other better.'</i>	Gentiana
<i>'I was so excited and got lots of energy.'</i>	Enkhbolor
<i>'I like all that we did together.'</i>	Satba
<i>'I have really enjoyed your presence between us every Tuesday, you entered the happiness on us, you make us forget our stress at least for a moment.'</i>	Rabad
<i>'I felt very good in myself because they are amazing people, lovely and kind. I'm so happy to have met them.'</i>	Vjollca

In relation to what participants would like to see included in future Acting for the Future workshops participants replied:

QUOTATION	PARTICIPANT
<i>'I liked what I did so even if they included something else I'm sure it would be fun.'</i>	Gentiana
<i>'More workshops.'</i>	Klara
<i>'I think it was excellent. Doesn't need anything.'</i>	Rabad

Participants were asked if their awareness of issues surrounding positive mental health and suicide awareness has increased as a result of attendance at the Acting for the Future Workshops and out of 13 participants, 10 said yes and 2 said no and one person did not reply.

3

Evidence-based Evaluation with Travellers and Roma

Smashing Times and the Samaritans, along with their partners, Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project, TravAct, Kildare Traveller Action and Musicantia, a Roma support group based in Dublin and Balbriggan, used the Acting for the Future structure to develop a targeted programme for young people and adults within the Traveller and Roma communities, supported by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office and Dormant Accounts Fund. A range of original culturally appropriate mental health education materials were developed with direct input from Travellers and Roma. The project promotes an intercultural approach to delivery of health care support services in an equal, accessible and effective way, acknowledging and valuing the diversity of all service users.

A range of original culturally appropriate mental health education materials were developed with direct input from members of the Traveller and Roma community. The materials developed were a project information leaflet, two mental health and suicide prevention leaflets, a drama workshop model, a documentary and a Final Report and Evaluation. Members of the Traveller and Roma community played a direct role in designing the project materials as they worked in partnership with Smashing Times and the Samaritans. The materials and activities were then rolled out with members of the Traveller and Roma Community and consisted of a programme of

workshops and talks and a social media and traditional PR and radio campaign, all directly involving Travellers and Roma and raising awareness of how to promote positive mental health and suicide prevention and how to access mainstream mental health services.

The evidence-based independent evaluation conducted by Trinity College Dublin for Acting for the Future with Travellers and Roma demonstrates that there was a successful increase for participants in relation to having increased awareness of positive mental health; increased awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles; increased knowledge of techniques for positive mental health and coping strategies; having information on support services; and being more confident in discussing mental health. Participants felt that the arts have a key role in positive mental health promotion.

As part of this project, Smashing Times also worked with a range of Traveller and Roma Groups including, South East Traveller Mental Health, Southside Traveller Action, Roma Equality Project, Tullow Women's Group, Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service, Laois Traveller Action and Carlow/Kilkenny Social Inclusion. The project promotes an intercultural approach to delivery of health care support services in an equal, accessible and effective way, acknowledging and valuing the diver-





Patrick Nevin, Bridget Dooley, Bridget O'Brien and Kathleen Cawley being interviewed by Smashing Times to explore what contemporary issues are facing young people and adults today regarding positive mental health and well-being and to identify ways forward for promoting the health and well-being of Travellers and Roma

sity of all service users. A total of 1,050 participants took part directly in project activities and a total of 203,500 are reached indirectly making an overall reach of 204,550.

The project initially ran from October 2018 to October 2020 and is supported by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office and the Dormant Accounts Fund and the Community Foundation Social Change Grant.

Interviews

As part of this project, Smashing Times conducted ten interviews to explore what contemporary issues are facing young people and adults today regarding positive mental health and well-being and to identify ways forward for promoting the health and well-being of Travellers and Roma. Ten interviews were conducted with twelve interviewees, including Margaret Mc Donagh, Kathleen Ward, Nelly Ward, Alice McDonagh, Kathleen Banks, Geraldine Mc Donagh, Kathleen Cawley, Patrick Nevin, Sergio Pruteanu and three interviewees who are anonymous.

In 2020 Smashing Times made a successful Acting for the Future documentary with Travellers to raise awareness of the impact of contemporary issues facing young people and adults regarding positive mental health and suicide prevention and to explore what can be done to provide support into the future. The documentary was screened at the Dublin Arts and Human Rights festival on 22 October 2020 followed by an online panel discussion chaired by Patrick Nevin from Tallaght Travellers Community

Development programme, and the guest speakers Bridget Dooley, a primary health care worker and Dr Linda Green, the head of Kildare Traveller Action.

The screening reached 497 members of the public.

The documentary was directed by Mary Moynihan, produced by Freda Manweiler and features interviews with Patrick Nevin, Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project; Linda Green, Primary Health Care Coordinator, Kildare Traveller Action; Bridget Dooley, Bridget O'Brien and Bridget Cawley, Primary Health Care Workers with Kildare Traveller Action and Kathleen Cawley and Bridget O'Brien, also from Kildare Traveller Action. The documentary combines a focus on positive mental health and well-being for Travellers linked to the theme of human rights for all. The documentary is available to view here

Conclusions of Evidence-based Evaluation with Travellers and Roma

The evidence based independent evaluation conducted by Trinity College Dublin for Acting for the Future with Travellers and Roma demonstrates that there was a successful increase for participants in relation to having increased awareness of positive mental health; increased awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles; increased knowledge of techniques for positive mental health and coping strategies; having information on support services; and being more confident in discussing mental health. Participants felt that the arts have a key role in positive mental health promotion.



Acting for the Future

**Partnerships
and
Collaboration**



According to the evidence-based independent evaluations by Trinity College Dublin, ‘Smashing Times work in collaboration with a wide range of voluntary and statutory organisations, trained professionals and academics. These collaborations are central to their work and are built into their models of intervention’.

Acting for the Future is implemented by Smashing Times in partnership with the Samaritans and a panel of advisors. The creative content is developed by lead artist Mary Moynihan in partnership with and with advice from, Joan Freeman, founder of Pieta House, Eimear Burke, Counselling Psychologist; Karen Ward, Clinical Psychotherapist and with input from a range of artist facilitators including Michael McCabe, Jenny Macdonald and Charlotte Tiernan. The producer is Freda Manweiler and the coordinator is Niamh Clowry. Evidence-based research and evaluation is led by Dr Charlotte Wilson.

Smashing Times offer a special thanks to the HSE National Social Inclusion Office for their vision and integrity in supporting the arts within intercultural health care practice, with a special thanks to Ruth Armstrong and Michelle Hayes, National Social Inclusion Office and Pat Healy, National Director, Community Strategy and Planning, HSE.

Acting for the Future works with a panel of registered psychotherapists and counselling psychologists. Counsellors involved in Acting for the Future are fully accredited. The main counsellors are Eimear Burke, Counselling psychologist and Karen Ward, Holistic Counselling Psychotherapist and they are accredited with the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Eimear Burke is also a member of the Psychological Society of Ireland. All counsellors are accredited and have ongoing supervision.

Acting for the Future has received support from a range of organisations including the HSE National Social Inclusion Office, the Dormant Accounts Fund, Erasmus+, ESB Energy for Generations Fund, Community Foundation for Ireland, Community Foundation Social Change, HSE National Lottery, Dublin City Council Arts Office, Arklow Mental Health Week, Waterford South East Samaritans, Dublin Samaritans, and Hospital Saturday Fund. The project links with primary health care workers, HSE Officers for Suicide Prevention, SPHE coordinators, the Mental Health Commission, the Department of Health, and with a range of key stakeholders and supports the promotion of Healthy Ireland, a government-led initiative which aims to create an Irish society where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health, and where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society.

Smashing Times offer a special thanks to the HSE National Social Inclusion Office for their vision and integrity in supporting the arts within intercultural health care practice



Acting for the Future

**Creative Arts for Health
and Well-Being Hub -
An Artistic Response to
Health and Well-Being**



In order to promote positive mental health and well-being in communities locally, nationally and internationally, Smashing Times continue to implement Acting for the Future which is made up of workshops, performances, film screenings, panel discussions and follow-up activities.

To support the work online, the company have established a Creative Arts for Health and Well-Being Hub, a new online interactive platform offering a range of services delivered online and through live streaming and presented into schools nationwide. The hub offers a unique programme of creative arts for health and well-being activities made up of workshops, well-being talks and exercise demonstrations. The aim is to use creative processes to promote positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention online on a weekly basis for young people.

The work focuses on positive mental health and suicide prevention with a focus on emotional well-being and ways to overcome stress and anxiety and ways to build resilience. The online practical workshop programme will be accompanied by talks and handouts with a list of resource services available, to promote positive mental health and well-being, ways to overcome stress and anxiety and how to build resilience, and suicide prevention. Talks will take place with representatives from a range of organizations including the Samaritans, Pieta House and the HSE to highlight the services and support they provide.

A key part of the online hub will be to have content generated by young people themselves, so they have a sense of ownership over the online platform. The success of a 'drama-based' approach is that by using drama you are enabling young people to generate content themselves so they feel a sense of ownership over the work and they feel they are directly engaged rather than being 'spoken to or at'. We want to continue this sense of ownership and direct engagement by the youth (as key stakeholders) in the online work similar to the face-to-face work.

Heroes Programme: A new element to Acting for the Future will be a heroes programme. Each month we will host a Heroes and Stories podcast inviting a young person or group of young people from different schools to talk about their heroes for positive mental health and wellbeing. We will invite young people across Ireland to share with us their stories of what the arts mean to them and how the arts can be used to promote positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention in society today. Listening to inspiring, interactive and immersive stories told across different platforms using the arts to promote positive mental health and well-being can be a vital way to engage young people and to promote positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention.

Creative Arts for Health and Well-Being Hub: An online hub providing information, resources and an app and online platform for sharing and connecting. The hub is an online platform that provides a live chat function with a counsellor 10am - 1pm Monday to Friday and offers users confidential and supportive access to resource materials such as videos, podcast, leaflets, etc.



Counselling Service: Short term intervention in the form of six sessions which can be either face-to-face or via video or telephone. Currently we will provide video and telephone counselling due to the current health restrictions. The counselling will cover short-term intervention related to stress and anxiety. If the participant presents with a mental health difficulty that is not suited to short-term intervention, the case manager will refer the participant to further treatment or GP referral.

As part of the programme we want to operate a Creative Drop-In Space for diverse communities, happening either in actual time and space or on line.

The Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality aims to use the arts to address active healthy lifestyles, and positive mental health and well-being. The centre aims to provide face-to-face and online arts and health programmes and a Creative Arts Psychotherapy service. The service, located in Dublin will work with partner health care providers to provide creative therapies to youth ages 13 - 30 and to adults experiencing marginalisation or disadvantage with a focus on gender equality, LGBTQI, refugees, Traveller and Roma communities and communities of place and interest designated as experiencing disadvantaged. The centre will be Ireland's first arts and health creative arts therapy centre open to all providing services through community engagement and through the provision of online services.

As the pandemic has extended into 2021, so too has our work to promote positive mental well-being. As part of the Creative Arts for Health and Well-Being hub, Smashing Times regularly distribute online newsletters and are planning a new podcast series



Joan Freeman

to promote positive mental health and well-being in creative and imaginative ways. The company have created an online exhibition space and we are currently developing the Smashing Times Virtual Centre, Museum and Digital Platform for the Arts and Human Rights, supporting artists, creatives, cultural operators, arts organisations and communities to access and promote the arts for equality, human rights and diversity online and to digitise the arts and live performance for national and international reach.

Emotional Landscapes Multi-Disciplinary Virtual Art Exhibition

'Many are the emotions that stir the human heart'

Emotional Landscapes is a multi-disciplinary virtual Art Exhibition with visual images, poetry, words, music and discussion. The exhibition is inspired by an artistic response to peace, health and well-being, influences of the pandemic, and themes of health and happiness intersecting with new borders of time and space in a changing landscape. The Emotional Landscapes exhibition was curated by Mary Moynihan, writer, director, theatre and film maker, and Artistic Director of Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality, Ireland, and contains artworks by Mary Moynihan, Noelle McAlinden, Visual Artist, Creative Advisor, Mental Health Campaigner, Curator and Cultural Broker; Hina Khan, Visual Artist; Feilim James, writer and poet and Fiona Bawn-Thompson, actor, writer and facilitator.

The exhibition features a panel discussion inspired by a response to the emotional impact of Covid-19, ways to promote positive mental health and well-being and a reflection on the space that exists within and between us in a changing landscape.

Panel Members are Noelle McAlinden, Visual Artist, Creative Advisor, Mental Health Campaigner, Curator and Cultural Broker; Hina Khan, Visual Artist and Eimear Burke, Counselling Psychologist. The panel discussion is moderated by Dr Stephen Herron, Researcher, Academic, Cultural Anthropologist and Community Relations Facilitator with Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality.

Link to Emotional Landscapes [here](#)

Online Newsletters

The January 2021 edition of the Smashing Times Art Connects Newsletter was themed Arts for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being, and featured the extraordinary artwork of visual artist Roxana Manouchehri. The newsletter reaches an audience of over 1,500 and provides a source of connection and conversation between artists and audiences throughout the world, at a time when physical connection has been removed from our lives. Smashing Times firmly believes in the power of the arts to foster hope, courage, and resilience in us all, and will continue to use creative processes to promote positive mental health and well-being in communities on local, national, and international levels.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of equipping ourselves with tools to reduce the impact of Covid-19 and to assist us to effectively improve our health and our common well-being during and after the current social, economic and health crisis. A key aim of Smashing Times is to support the role of the arts in promoting physical and positive mental health and well-being and to build relations between the cultural, social and health sectors to effectively improve society's health and well-being.

INTIME

WRITTEN BY MARY MOYNIHAN

DIRECTED BY MARY MOYNIHAN AND MARK QUINN

EDITED BY MARK QUINN PERFORMANCES BY KWASIE BOYCE AND CARLA RYAN MUSICAL COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE BY LISA MCLOUGHLIN-GNEMMI
PRODUCED BY FREDA MANWEILER AND NIAMH CLOWRY POST-PRODUCTION FACILITIES HIGH WIRE

In Time

By Mary Moynihan

In time . . .

In time we will recover.

In time there will be a vaccine and we will be able to go outside, to work, to the park, to the mountains, to meet our family and friends, to travel to the ends of the earth if we wish.

In time we will rebuild our world.

We will create an equal society where people count - our family, friends and co-workers, and all those who provide services and look after each other.

We will get our values right, our priorities straight and create a world for what really matters - people, the planet we live on and dignity and respect for all.

In time we will meet each other in the darkness of a theatre space and know again the magic of a connection that is invisible yet truly felt.

In time we shall hug those we love and have missed.

In time we shall mourn and remember those who have died.

In time we shall bear witness.

In time we will breathe calmly again.

In time we shall create and imagine what if. . .

In time we shall reject governments that do not respect people or act on our behalf.

In time we shall create respect for the planet we live on and know that our atmosphere is clearing up and soon the world will be able to breathe again.

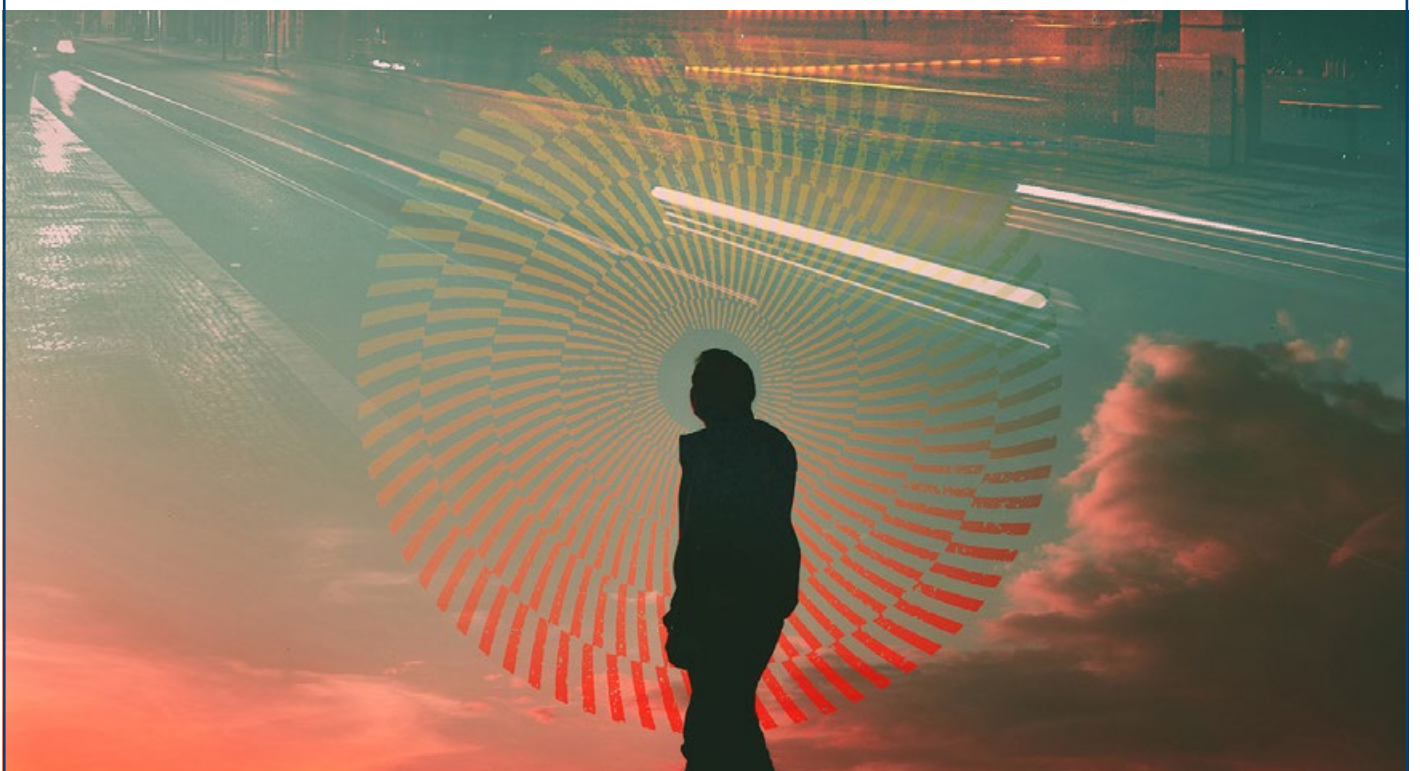
In time we shall be true to our inner selves, hear the inner voice of our own souls and follow our heart's desire.

In time we shall serve ourselves and equally, at the same time, serve others.

In time we shall fight the good fight and at the same time, let go.

In time we shall enjoy life and be present in the moment.

And perhaps one day, in time, we shall realise . . . there is no time.



not an art

Written by Féilim James

my pain is not an object
exchanging blue and red
matching curves angelic
with surface smooth as skin

no

my pain is not a crown
flame-forged and gleaming
enamelled black and gold
borne with a hero's grit

no

my pain is not a science
not a romance, not an art
my pain is not a failure's
indulgent dream of death

no

my pain is unsilent silence my pain a brutality ancient
my pain is the anthems of forever in a second

*Smashing Times would like
to thank all of the funders
and supporters of the Acting
for the Future Project:*

Acting for the Future
Creative Arts for Health
and Well-Being



- **Business to Arts**
- **Community Foundation for Ireland**
- **Dormant Accounts Fund**
- **Dublin Bus Community Spirit Awards**
- **Dublin City Council Arts Office**
- **Dublin North East Inner City Community Grants**
- **ESB Energy for Generations Fund**
- **GSK Ireland Impact Awards**
- **Hospital Saturday Fund**
- **HSE National Lottery Grant Scheme**
- **HSE National Social Inclusion Office**
- **Samaritans**
- **Trinity College Dublin**
- **Aviva Stadium Grant**
- **Erasmus+**



About Us

The Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality is dedicated to the promotion, study and practice of the arts and equality.

The centre operates as a world class arts space and digital hub for artists, activists, communities and the general public across Ireland and internationally, providing a resource service and a training and networking agency in relation to using high quality creative processes and collaborative arts practice to promote human rights and equality for all.

The centre produces an annual and multi-annual inter-disciplinary arts programme with a focus on economic development, tourism, community infrastructure and education. All artistic mediums are supported with a focus on the performing and collaborative arts including theatre, film, visual arts, dance and music. Smashing Times' vast experience conducting arts-based projects both nationally and internationally and its global reputation for excellence in relation to using professional and socially engaged arts practice to promote equality is drawn upon in the implementation of all programmes.



Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality

Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7, Ireland.

Tel: + 353 (0) 1 865 6613 **Tel:** + 353 (0) 87 221 4245

Email: info@smashingtimes.ie **Website:** www.smashingtimes.ie

 www.facebook.com/smashingtimescentre

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For more information visit www.smashingtimes.ie

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