

# CONNECTING THROUGH THE ARTS

# EVALUATION REPORT



CHANGE POWERED BY COMMUNITIES



September  
2026

Prepared by  
**Lasting  
Support**



Prepared for  
**Ealing  
Council**



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# POSTER



## Wellness for *You,* Creativity for Them!

Enjoy free wellness and mindfulness this summer holiday while your children engage with art and music



Every Wednesday:  
July 1st until August 28th

Start At : 17:00 - 19:00



**Dickens Yard**  
16A New Broadway, London W5 2XA

Spaces are limited - book your place today!

*Because parents deserve a break too* 

Scan the QR below to register



**Suitable for children aged 4 - 18 years**



# DISCLAIMER

Only those who willingly agreed to participate are featured. These materials are utilised solely for reporting and monitoring purposes. We respect and uphold the privacy of individuals who have chosen not to share visual, video, or case study content, ensuring their confidentiality and personal choices are honoured.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over July and August 2026, Connecting Through the Arts gave families in Ealing Town a free, safe weekly space to be creative, look after their wellbeing and get to know their neighbours. Around 40 parents and children took part in a typical Wednesday session.

- Delivered by: Lasting Support Services
- Funded by: Ealing Council, through Your Voice, Your Town
- Location: Dickens Yard, Ealing Town
- Venues: Christ the Saviour Church Hall, OPEN Ealing, ID Studios
- When: Every Wednesday, 5:00–7:30pm, July–August 2026
- Sessions delivered: 9 Wednesday sessions delivered 2.5 hours each
- Typical session: About 40 children and young people and 24 parents or carers

## Who we are

Lasting Support CIC is an organisation that supports women, children and families affected by domestic abuse, trauma and harmful practices. We designed and led Connecting Through the Arts projects. The project had one simple aim: to help families feel safer, less isolated and more connected to their town. We especially wanted to reach families living with isolation, domestic abuse, trauma or other disadvantage, including families who would not usually walk into a formal support service. The project was a partnership between our team, local creative practitioners, volunteers and local venues:

- Payzee, Intervention Lead, Lasting Support: led the programme and ran it each week
- Lasting Support staff, including our CBT therapist and psychotherapist: wellbeing support, check-ins and follow-up casework
- Maria, co-founder of B.Fly Face Painting: children's art sessions. Maria is also a mum and a service user herself.
- Daniel Roddick, singer-songwriter and vocal coach: music sessions, as our Creative Ambassador
- Rebecca, yoga teacher and wellness practitioner: yoga, breathwork and meditation for mums
- 5 volunteers: supported the children's sessions, refreshments, setup and welcoming families
- Christ the Saviour Church Hall, OPEN Ealing and ID Studios: hosted our sessions
- Ealing Council: funded the project through Your Voice, Your Town



## WHAT WE DELIVERED

We delivered 9 Wednesday from 5:00 to 7:30pm through July and August, across three venues within a few minutes' walk of each other in and around Dickens Yard.

How it worked. Parents and children took part at the same time but in separate spaces nearby. Children did creative sessions while mums had protected time for their own wellbeing, just around the corner. At other points we brought families together for shared activities. Having the venues so close together meant mums felt safe leaving their children, and families often met in Dickens Yard beforehand for a coffee while the children played in the traffic-free square.

Activities included:

- Arts and crafts and art therapy
- Music and singing, including music-based therapeutic activities
- Poetry and creative writing for both adults and children
- Drama and facilitated creative expression
- Yoga, Pilates, breathwork and meditation
- Parent wellbeing activities and shared family activities
- Safety-focused discussions and informal learning
- A community eclipse-watching event on 12 August

How families found us. We carried out extensive local outreach and asked our partner organisations to refer families to the programme. We also promoted the sessions on Eventbrite, where people could register as long as they lived or worked in Ealing Town.



The variety was deliberate. Not everyone engages in the same way, so families could try different things and find what worked for them. Who took part. Demand was strong from the start. A typical session had about 40 children and young people and 24 parents or carers.

Some families found us simply by walking past. Because the sessions were visible in Dickens Yard, people stopped to ask what was happening, and where appropriate we registered them on the spot.

Support alongside the activities. Lasting Support staff, including our therapists, were there every week. This gave families a trusted person to talk to informally. Where someone needed more help, we arranged follow-up conversations and offered advocacy and casework support.

### **What difference the project made**

The project made a real difference to families' wellbeing, their relationships with each other and how connected and safe they felt in Ealing Town. We know this from attendance, what participants told us, what our practitioners saw, and the follow-up support families went on to receive. Participants also spoke about their experience on camera in our project video.

Less isolation, more support from each other. Families had a reliable place to go every week of the summer. Attendance stayed high and families kept coming back. Mums told us that meeting other mothers gave them encouragement they had not had before.

"Since I've joined I feel like it's actually changed my life, because I have been going through difficulties for nine years... speaking to other mothers and getting that sense of encouragement from other people. I've had a bit more peace in my life." (parent)

# FEEDBACK

Closer families. Because parents and children came together, the sessions strengthened family relationships as well as individual wellbeing.

"The best thing is having my child with me when I attend these sessions, because it has brought me and my child closer." (parent)

Better wellbeing for mums. Mums often lose out when the focus is on getting children out and about. The protected time for yoga, breathwork and meditation helped them relax and reconnect with their bodies.

"I love the yoga sessions. I've actually been able to relax, which is one of the things I could not do before, and I look forward to coming every week." (Yasmin)

"It's been so great to see some of the mothers really embrace the practice of yoga and actually surprise themselves at what their bodies can do... to just show up and be themselves and not need to perform." (Rebecca, yoga teacher)

Children expressing themselves. Children had a calm space to be creative and express feelings they may not be able to put into words, with friends around them.

"It gives you space to be creative and use your imagination, whereas in other settings you might not be able to. It's very relaxed and very comfortable." (Tamayah and Rey)

"I feel happy. We're learning new stuff in art and music." (Child participant)

Feeling safer in their own town. Parents told us that many people in Ealing have not been feeling safe. Holding the sessions in Dickens Yard, a pleasant, traffic-free space, helped families feel safe and enjoy their town again. One mum who had rarely spent time there now calls it "such a beautiful place to come to chill with the kids."

"I know that a lot of people in Ealing have not been feeling safe... Dickens Yard is quite close, there's no traffic. It's a nice place where you can just come in and sit down." (Maria, parent and practitioner)

A route into support. 5 families who needed more help received follow-up advocacy, casework or signposting. None of them had to go through a formal referral first. This matters most in the summer, when families have less contact with schools and other professionals. A welcoming place for the whole community. Our venue partners valued having the project in their buildings. ID Studios told us they were "happy to have a community group in the building" and want the studio to be "a space for everyone, where everyone is welcome."



# WHAT WE LEARNT

Our biggest lesson is that feeling safe in your town is closely tied to feeling that you belong in it. Five things stood out.

1. Being visible brings people in, which surprised us. We did not expect so many people to walk up and ask to join. Meeting people where they already are, in a busy and familiar public space, reached families who would never have come through a referral.
2. Creativity is a gentle way in. A parent could come for yoga, or a child for music or art. No one had to start by talking about trauma or calling themselves vulnerable. Trust built naturally, and harder conversations followed when families were ready.
3. Mums need support too. Supporting children on their own can miss what is happening for the whole household. Giving mums protected time nearby while their children were busy was one of the most valued parts of the project.
4. Some of the most important conversations happen around the activity. Having trusted, safeguarding-trained staff there every week meant parents could say "Can I talk to you about something?" and get the right response.
5. Summer matters. Strong attendance all summer showed that family support should not pause when schools close.

# WHAT WAS HARD

We received many referrals from EACH, social services and our own network for families who were extremely vulnerable and in crisis. Many parents felt their lives were falling apart. At first they found it hard to relax and enjoy the activities, and what they really wanted was practical support. We offered this through follow-up casework, but getting these families involved in the programme took a lot of emotional support and encouragement. Everyone who got into it was glad they had.

Time was a constant pressure. There always seemed to be more need than time, and our venue bookings often felt tight. We adapted by holding many support conversations in one of the coffee shops or outside in Dickens Yard while the children played nearby. This turned out to work well. It gave parents privacy and confidentiality, and mums could open up without breaking down in front of their children.

What helped most was the parents themselves. As they got to know each other, they began to support one another, and that peer support became one of the most valuable parts of the programme.

What we learned about Ealing Town. There is a strong appetite for free, family-friendly activities in the town centre. Many local families had never really used Dickens Yard, and once they did, it became a place they wanted to return to. The town's existing venues were also very willing to open their doors to a community group.





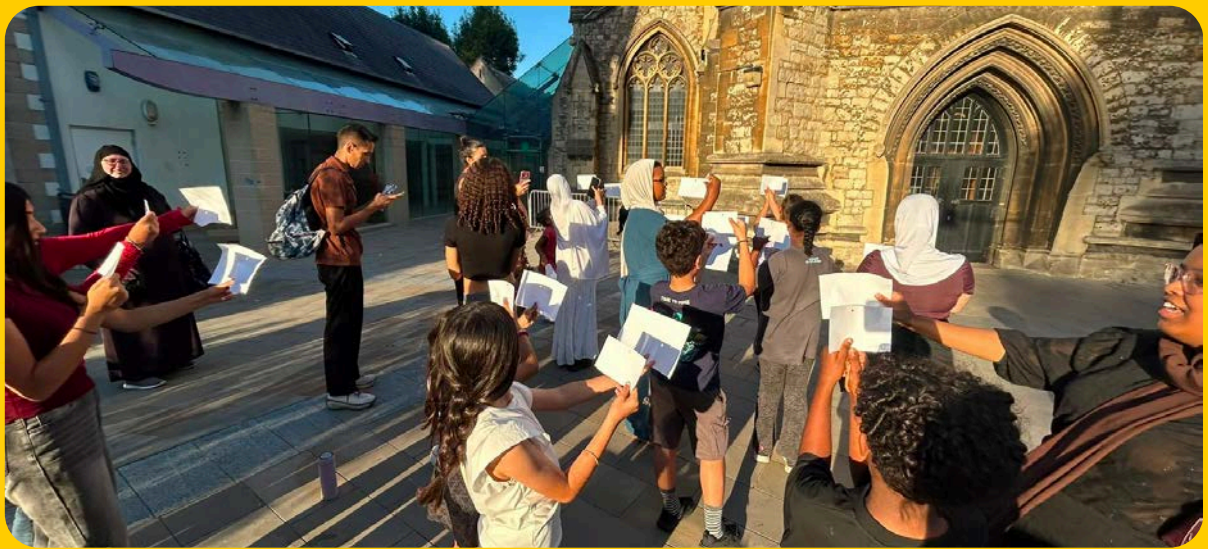
### Top tips for others:

- Use places people already walk past, and make your activity visible.
- Offer something for parents and children at the same time, close together.
- Lead with fun and creativity, and let support follow.
- Have skilled, trusted staff there every week, not just activity leaders.
- Leave room for walk-ins and have a simple way to register them.

### What next

The funded period has ended, but the need has not. We want to keep what we built going and grow it.

- Keeping in touch with families. Families who needed more help are still receiving advocacy, casework or signposting from our team, so no one lost support when the weekly sessions ended.
- We are preparing an application to The National Lottery Community Fund to run the programme during school holidays. At the moment, all our other therapeutic programmes run in term time only. This summer showed us how much families benefit from support during the holidays, when they often have little else to turn to. The programme also proved to be a gentle, low-pressure way of encouraging hesitant families to take the next step and seek further support.
- Keeping our partnerships. Christ the Saviour Church Hall, OPEN Ealing and ID Studios have welcomed us, and we plan to work with them and our practitioners again [confirm].
- Sharing the model. Creativity, wellbeing, family connection, community safety and early intervention worked best together. We will use this learning to shape our future family work and share it with Ealing Council and local partners.



# OUR MESSAGE TO OTHERS

If you want to make a difference to your town, do it: start small, start where people already are, and make it welcoming. You do not need a big building or a complicated plan. Families will come when an activity is free, visible, safe and fun, and once people feel they belong, everything else becomes possible. Your Voice Your Town gave us the chance to prove that in Ealing. We would encourage any local group with an idea to apply.

## Conclusion

Connecting Through the Arts set out to help families feel safer, less isolated and more connected to Ealing Town. Around 41 parents and children took part in a typical Wednesday session. Sessions regularly filled up (not all agreed to be on camera), and local people walked in to join.

The activities mattered, but so did what happened around them. People met each other. Families spent good time together. Mums had space for themselves, and children found new ways to express themselves. Families who were struggling had someone they trusted to talk to, and got further support where they needed it.

In one mum's words, the project "actually changed my life." Our central lesson is that feeling safe in your town is closely tied to feeling that you belong in it.