

## The Nexus Project

Connecting Women & Wellbeing through Creativity  
(2022) Evaluation Report

Since September 2021, a weekly women's group has been hosted by the Good Mental Health Cooperative (GMHC). The group, which is part of The Nexus Project, aims to provide a safe space where women can connect with others, take part in guided creative activities and boost their wellbeing in a supported environment. Initial funding was through the Tampon Tax and then funding for 2022 was received from Awards for All, through the National Lottery Community Fund. Additional funding to continue the women's group through to June 2023 has recently been received from the Portsmouth League of Friends.

The group meets every Tuesday morning, from 11am-12.30pm, at the Buckland United Reformed Church in Fratton, Portsmouth. The project is supported by a regular sessional worker and a wider team of volunteers; many of whom started out as members who then chose to take on a more dedicated role within the group. Attendance will commonly range from between **15-20 women per session**. A WhatsApp group and online mailing list was established in early 2022 to enable regular communication between the GMHC and group members, and to provide a space where members can share photos of their creative work. This has extended a sense of community for the women beyond the weekly sessions.

Each week, members have the opportunity to take part in a different creative activity led by a professional facilitator. Throughout 2022 the group participated in a wide range of creative activities including **Collage, Music & Singing, Pebble Art, Macramé, Weaving and Bird Box Making**; and wellbeing activities such as producing their own **Vision Boards and Achievement Jars**. They also experimented with new arts and crafts mediums including watercolours, inks, paints, wax and pencil drawing.

From January – November 2022, the Nexus women's group met for **39 weekly sessions** and also hosted a number of other events during this time. In March, the group organised a celebratory event to mark International Women's Day 2022 offering information stalls and a programme of wellbeing workshops which was well-attended by the local community. In July and August, the group took a short break from its usual schedule to better accommodate member's increased childcare commitments during the school summer holidays - instead holding 6 mixed sessions. These were open to men, women and children - with each summer activity session attracting 10-20 participants. With the women's group reaching the end of its first year, a special get-together was organised in December 2022 with music, singing and a festive lunch which was attended by 27 members.

To assess the impact of The Nexus Project on mental health and wellbeing, the Good Mental Health Cooperative worked in partnership with the women's group to **co-produce a simple evaluation tool, called the Wellbeing Check-In**. Each week, before and after a group session, members were invited to complete the Wellbeing Check-In, assigning scores to any positive or negative feelings they were experiencing. To assess levels of positivity, members were asked to score how *Loved, Understood, Motivated, Energetic, Healthy* and *Cheerful* they are feeling. To assess levels of negativity, members were asked to score how *In Pain, Lonely, Neglected, Angry, Anxious* and *Tired* they are feeling. Each emotion was scored from 1 (Not At All) to 6 (Extremely) and then combined to give overall positive and negative scores, which members then recorded on a Wellbeing Check-In.

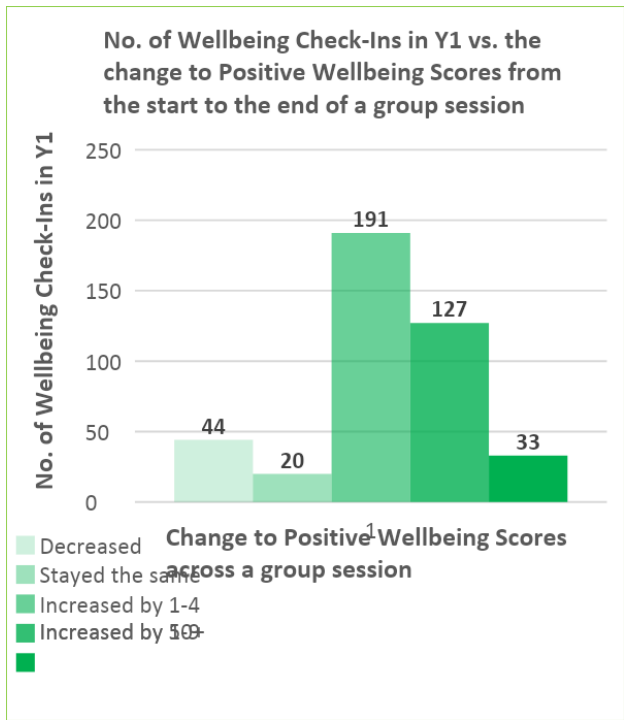
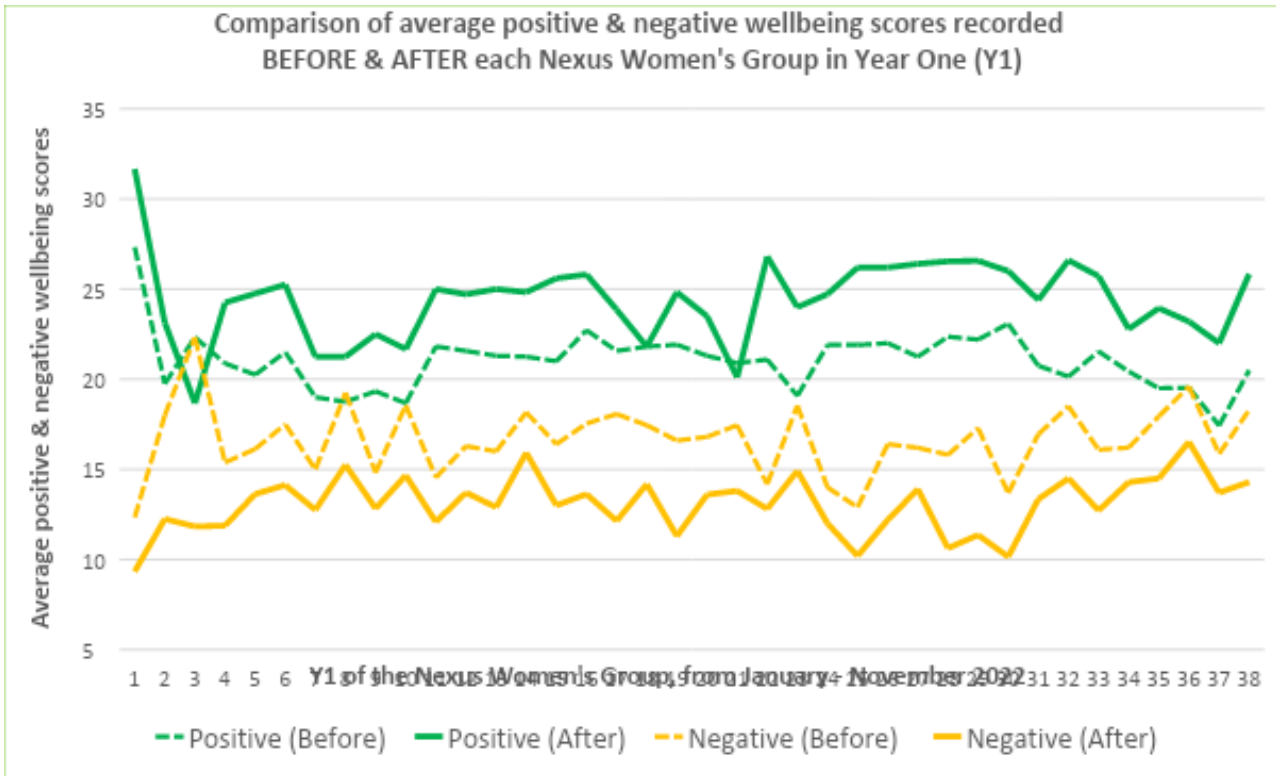
In December 2022, a survey was shared with the women's group asking for their feedback on the project to date – there were 17 responses. When asked to share what had been the most beneficial part of attending the weekly women's group, the most common responses were; **connecting with others; finding a space to be calm and relaxed; learning new skills; and becoming more aware of their own emotions through the Wellbeing Check-In**.

From January – November 2022, the women's group completed **415 Wellbeing Check-Ins**. Due to the informal nature of the summer activity sessions, no Wellbeing Check-Ins were completed during these groups in July & August. Analysis of the data for 2022 showed the following trends, which have also been visually represented in the graphs below.

**An increase in positive feeling can be seen consistently throughout 2022 when comparing Wellbeing Scores recorded before and after a women's group session.**

- Most commonly, members increased their Positive Wellbeing Score by 1-4 points, as seen on 191 Check-Ins.
- A further 127 Check-Ins showed a larger increase of 5-9 points to overall Positive Wellbeing Scores.
- By the end of 2022, twice as many Wellbeing Check-Ins showed a positivity increase of more than 10 points across a group session when compared with the start of the year – an increase from 4% to 10% of Check-Ins collected during each period.

A decrease in negative feeling can be seen consistently throughout 2022 when comparing Wellbeing Scores recorded before and after a women’s group session.



- Most commonly, members decreased their Negative Wellbeing Score by 1-4 points, as seen on 224 Check-Ins.
- A further 83 Check-Ins showed a larger decrease of 5-9 points to overall Negative Wellbeing Scores.
- For 27 Check-Ins, negative feelings were reduced by more than 10 points across the course of a group session.

