

A Journey through the Academy of Creative Minds

*An exploratory narrative and evaluation of the impact
of a creative arts programme with researchers*

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The ACM has been an extraordinary, life changing experience. It has been a unique opportunity to explore, play and learn within a fun, supportive and enabling environment. The experience has been rejuvenating, exciting and wholly relevant to my career...my six months with the creatives and the team from R&D North West has given me the confidence to stride forth and make exciting things happen.

ACM Participant, 2016

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Executive Summary

- 13 participants took part in a 6 month programme to explore the use of creative arts in communicating the messages of research. The programme comprised of a residential and 5 monthly workshops with creative artists. The Academy of Creative Minds culminated in participants presenting their work either as live performances or showing films they had made, at the NHS R&D North Wests' Let's Talk Research Conference in September 2016.
- Data was collected throughout the programme via reflective logs, observations, interviews and questionnaires to explore the journeys all taking part; participants, creative mentors and the NHS R&D North West team.
- The residential launch of the programme set the tone for the continuing programme approach and created a "safe space" for participants to explore creative arts in the context of health research. Ongoing workshops allowed continued exploration, and creative mentors supported, encouraged and guided participants to shape their creative pieces. Their role was crucial in developing quality outputs from a participant perspective.
- The emergent nature of the programme was both necessary and challenging. Flexibility allowed the programme to emerge around the needs of the participants and allowed creative artists to work across participants as needed. However, participants and creative artists sometimes struggled with this and there was a reported desire for more clarity going forwards.
- Data collected highlights the personal journeys that participants experienced in terms of their own learning and development. Increased confidence and renewed energy in careers were some of the examples of impact at a personal level. Participants felt inspired to explore new and novel approaches to communicating their research, and they had found ways of applying their learning in their professional roles more widely.
- Whilst evidence of wider dissemination of their creative work was limited, data suggests that participants have utilised many of the skills, tools and techniques learned during the programme, more widely in their professional roles. Considering methods for communicating messages, and having more tools to do this appears to be a major impact of the programme.
- The Academy of Creative Minds helped to develop a sense of community across those taking part. Participants supported each other throughout the programme, and enjoyed the opportunities to work alongside others, recognising that traditional research roles can be isolating.
- Data reflects an ongoing tension for participants between wanting to advocate creative approaches, and the readiness of the academic and health system to receive these new approaches. They acknowledged that their participation in this programme was an entry point to the conversation, and a way of starting to build an evidence base for this approach

1. The Starting Point for a Journey

NHS R&D North West is an organisation that likes to push the boundaries. Innovation and creativity are at their core and they are not afraid to explore the unknown, bringing diverse individuals, theories, concepts and communities together. Their aim is to *create aspirational and innovative environments to enable health and social care communities to grow, thrive and deliver high quality research*. The Academy of Creative Minds embodies this aim. For a number of years the team has explored the creative arts, looking at how these disciplines might be utilised to enhance the messages and broaden the impact of research. The years of exploration have created a test bed of activity, which has quickly grown into a myriad of creative arts offerings, supporting both the professional development of individual researchers, and the impact and strength of research communities. Over the last five years, exploration has seen the team commission a cadre of creative artists to deliver workshops and programmes from stop motion animation to comedy and over 60 researchers have benefitted from opportunities to explore in a safe space, the practical ways in which these arts and skills can be put to use in healthcare research. The NHS R&D North West YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/NHSNorthRandD> hosts a number of films displaying the outputs of some of these ventures.

The Academy of Creative Minds programme is a culmination of this ongoing exploration, resulting in a programme of learning and personal development which sees researchers work alongside creative artists from a broad range of disciplines from circus performer to script writer, to develop their own creative work to enhance the message of their research. Stuart Eglin, Director at NHS R&D North West describes in his blog post “The Talk of My Life” (link <http://www.stuarteglin.com/2016/07/the-talk-of-my-life/>) the journey to, and the reasons for, the Academy of Creative Minds; *...we commissioned a team of creatives to work with us on a programme that would introduce creative techniques to researchers and other healthcare workers...to look at ways that creative techniques can improve communication of evidence, to look for ways that creative techniques can be incorporated into research methods, and to pursue a personal journey of transformation*.

Over a six month period 12 individuals (a mixture of researchers and wider healthcare professionals) took part in the inaugural Academy of Creative Minds programme with 6 creative artist mentors, undertaking 6 workshops, on a journey of self-discovery and personal and professional development, presenting their creative pieces at the NHS R&D North West annual Let’s Talk Research Conference in front of colleagues and peers. This report provides an insight into the journey from multiple perspectives and explores the impact of the programme on individuals as members of this community.

2. Preparation for the Journey - How will we get there?

Whilst the NHS R&D NW team had spent time exploring creative activities they had not previously embarked on the development of a longer term learning programme utilising these activities. The initial steps in developing this saw the team put out a call, across the creative community via the Arts Council asking for creative people to help run workshops to support health researchers in communicating their research in a more engaging and impactful way

In June 2015, creative artists from a broad range of disciplines came along to “audition”. The NHS R&D team hosted the auditions using a panel of colleagues comprising of Nick Ponsillo from Manchester Camerata, Dr Lyn Williams from the University of Liverpool, Professor Stuart Eglin from NHS R&D NW and Gillian Southgate NHS R&D NW. They then identified those artists who had grasped the concept of what they were trying to do in the ACM and offered a realistic and professional workshop idea.

Graphic 1: The Creative Team



Six creative artists were initially enlisted to co-create the Academy of Creative Minds programme in collaboration with the NHS R&D NW team. A seventh member of the creative team was also enlisted during planning stages; the full team can be seen in Graphic 1. Creative artists were compiled from a range of artistic genres to bring diversity to the programme (further information on creative biographies can be

accessed here <http://www.research.northwest.nhs.uk/work/academy-of-creative-minds/academy-of-creative-minds-artist-biographies/>).

During this initial stage there was no set ideology about how the programme would be structured, or what it would entail. The NHS R&D NW team recognised that open space would be required to enable the newly formed team of creative artists to come together and share their ideas, to inform the development of the programme. Over a 6 month preparation period, the NHS R&D NW team came together with the creative artists as a group to explore what a potential programme might look like. The process that followed was emergent and flexible to allow both the creatives and the NHS R&D NW team to get to know each other, and understand more about the experiences, skills and talents that each creative artist brought to the collaboration. A number of activities took place to support the cohesion of the creative artists as a team, and to explore the ways in which their artistic disciplines might contribute to the programme, these included:

- Whole team meetings in “open space” allowing both creatives and the NHS R&D NW team to explore initial ideas
- Trial workshops – where all team members could gain further understanding of the different artistic skills and techniques that each creative artist could offer

In December 2015 after this process of ongoing review and reflection in collaboration with the creatives artists where ideas were tweaked and fine-tuned, an initial structure for the Academy of Creative Minds programme was developed.

3. The Vehicle of Choice

This emergent process resulted in a loose structure for a programme taking place across a 6 month period. The aims of the programme were to:

- **Challenge** researchers to consider the ways in which they disseminate their research findings
- **Empower** researchers to be much more courageous and creative in both thinking and outputs
- **Inspire** participants to bring the arts and science together in health research
- **Increase** confidence to transform communication skills

The programme would comprise of the following components as a starting point:

- A 2 day residential in March 2016, to launch the programme and immerse the participants in different creative skills and techniques, fully experiencing the different artistic disciplines and to begin to consider which art forms they may like to explore further in their creative pieces.
- 5 workshops taking place on a monthly basis from April 2016 to September 2016, where participants come back together and are supported by a “creative mentor” to develop their creative work.
- Performance of creative pieces at the Royal Northern College of Music, as part of the annual Let’s Talk Research Conference in September 2016

Although the over-arching structure had been developed, *a flexible, emergent and iterative approach to the programme elements was agreed*. There were some unknown quantities at this stage in terms of the number of participants who might take part as well as their individual preferences for the art forms they may wish to utilise. In addition, there was no way at this stage of knowing whether participants may want to work collaboratively on something, or individually. All members of the team agreed on the importance of not having a pre-formed idea of how the programme might work out in terms of content and recognised that the process would need to flex to the needs of the participants.

To ensure direct support for participants, the decision was made that each of the creative artists would be assigned as a “mentor” to each participant or group of participants. The process of allocation was to be agreed once the programme had begun, allowing the needs of participants to guide the process.

At the forefront of these decisions was an implicit understanding of all members of the Academy of Creative Minds team, that the creative process needed to take precedent from the outset, to ensure that the programme would be as useful and impactful as possible for participants.

4. Bringing Passengers on Board

Recruitment to the programme began in January inviting applications from healthcare researchers, either individually or as a team, via a social media campaign and through mailshots across NHS R&D NW teams’ research networks, associates and other partners and associated organisations. Recognising the innovative nature of both the programme and approach, as well as the emergent content, the team also developed short film clips featuring each creative artist individually, as well as a collaborative piece, to help potential participants understand more about what they might experience if they took part in the programme. The films are hosted on the NHS R&D NW website <http://www.research.northwest.nhs.uk/work/academy-of-creative-minds/>. Recruitment took place over a 3 month period and the team aimed to recruit approximately 50 participants. After the initial recruitment period 15 applications had been received from a mixture of researchers in NHS and academic settings and other healthcare professionals who wanted to explore different ways to communicate messages and information. Of these, 13 participants confirmed and attended the programme launch event in March 2016.

5. Methods of Mapping the Journey and Destination

As this was a new venture for the team, the creatives and the participants it was important for the NHS R&D NW team to capture as much of the “journey” as possible. The priority was to capture data to “map” the emergent process that was taking place and to gain an insight into what was learned not just at a participant level, but also at the creative and team level more widely. A framework for capturing this learning was established and data was collated before, during and after the Academy of Creative Minds, to evaluate the impact of the programme overall. Essentially the evaluation would explore the experiences of all those taking part utilising a range of methods to collect data over the 6 month period of the programme:

- Pre and post programme questionnaire for participants; self-rated items relating to perception of creativity, communication and individual leadership behaviours, collected two weeks prior to the start of the Academy of Creative Minds and one month following conclusion. The pre programme questionnaire also gathered data on individual aims and objectives.

- The post programme questionnaire additionally asked for participant's views on the personal and professional impact of taking part as well as wider learning.
- Observations; undertaken at the residential component, each workshop and the final conference performances. These were mainly unstructured in nature due to the exploratory nature of both the programme and the evaluation. Audio files and film footage of workshops and discussions between participants and creative mentors was also utilised to assist in observational data collection.
- At the residential, real-time feedback was captured via post-it comment boards, as well as a focus group at the end of day 2.
- Short one-to-one interviews during workshops; with participants to explore experiences "in the moment"
- Reflective diaries; all those taking part were asked to complete a reflective log following the residential and each workshop and were invited to submit these to the evaluator. The reflective cycle was encouraged, but this was not a mandatory framework and reflections could be submitted in any form.
- Post programme semi-structured telephone interviews; undertaken approximately 7 weeks post programme. These were undertaken with a sample of 8 participants and 5 creative artists.
- Review of supporting documents; a desk top review of the initial applications, items generated by participants throughout the programme such as scripts and storyboards, as well as data from the Academy of Creative Minds team meetings and debriefs.
- Google plus online space; developed with the aim of having a shared space, and to support the development of community amongst participants and the creative team, interaction with this space was reviewed as part of the evaluation process.

It is important to note that the evaluator was very much "on the journey" and at times observational data was gathered ethnographically as they were immersed in some elements of activity. The report that follows will take the reader on a journey; in part narrative, and in part evaluative, capturing learning in terms of both process and outcomes for all those who were involved in the Academy of Creative Minds. The report will be set out in the following sections to explore:

- Passenger Details: Who are the participants and where do they want to go?
- Setting Off – The Journey Begins: Insights from data collected at the residential
- Highlights of the Journey – Inspiration to Action: Insights from

data collected at the creative workshops

- Arrival at the Destination? Observations of participant performances
- How Far did Passengers Travel? Exploring the pre and post-programme questionnaires
- Where are Passengers Going Next? Insights from the post-programme interviews
- Continuing the Journey: Conclusions and recommendations

6. Passenger Details – Who are you and where do you want to go?

Applications for the programme were received from 15 individuals. Of these, 13 attended the residential and 12 continued to the workshop element of the programme. As well as the original participants 8 members of the NHS R&D NW team took part in the programme. Opportunities were also offered to associates of the NHS R&D NW team, and initially 3 associates attended the residential, and this reduced to 1 associate participating by the May workshop. A breakdown of participants attending can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Number of Participants

Programme Element	Applicants	NHS R&D NW Team	Associates
Residential	13	8	3
Monthly Workshops: April	12	8	2
Monthly Workshops: May to September	12	8	1
End of Programme Conference Performance	12	8	1

Of the 13 applicants who attended the residential, 5 described their primary role as being a researcher. Other applicants had roles with strong research elements for example, being a postdoctoral student whilst working as a healthcare professional, or a university lecturer undertaking research as part of their role. Others had less research involvement themselves, but had supportive roles to both researchers and the dissemination of research, for example an engagement and communications manager and a Trust librarian.

The applicants were predominantly female with 9 female and 4 male attendees. Graphic 2 shows a breakdown of applicant occupational roles.

6.1 Where do you want to go?

Participants were asked to detail their reasons for undertaking the programme during the application phase. An analysis of original application forms extracted a number of recurring themes, these included:

Graphic 2: Participant Occupational Roles



- Increase understanding of the potential of creative methods
- To learn how to present ideas and communicate messages in a more impactful way
- To increase confidence and skills in presenting and utilising creative approaches
- To enhance communication skills to better engage with the public and peers
- To build networks across the research community

At this point, it should be noted that observational data and reflective logs were collected from all attendees including the NHS R&D NW team and associates. Pre and post-programme questionnaires and interviews focused on participants and associates specifically to understand their personal experiences in more detail.

For the purposes of this report in the ACM Evaluation 2017

main the term “participants” will be used as a

cumulative term to encompass all those who participated in the programme, whether applicants, associates or NHS R&D NW team members, however the aforementioned distinction in terms of data collected should be acknowledged.

7. Setting off – The Journey Begins

The two day residential was the launch of the programme and an opportunity for the whole Academy of Creative Minds community to come together, and for each participant to explore the different art forms over the course of the first full day. Pre-planning for this event resulted in a structure for day one, and a looser structure for day two which the creative team would devise iteratively, after seeing the outcomes of day one.

The NHS R&D North West team also brought two associate academics on board to “anchor” the learning in a focused academic reflective session at the end of day 1, allowing participants the opportunity to consider their learning in the health research context. On day two participants would work in two groups with three or four of the creative artists to develop a performance piece based around the central stimulus and concept “health research is essential for better patient care”.

On day one participants were welcomed to the programme as a whole group and were introduced to the aims of the programme and the format of the two days. They were then split into two groups where they would experience three “taster sessions” from creative artists in their group. The groups would then rotate to experience the other three taster sessions. These groups would also be retained for day two.

Below, data will be thematically explored in relation to participants’ experiences and reactions across the two days. All data sets will be considered to contribute to this.

7.1 Insights from this leg of the journey

Across all data collected during this element of the programme, a number of common themes and observations could be extracted:

7.1.1 Breaking down barriers – “safe space”

Participant comments both in the moment and from reflective diaries consistently referenced their surprise at the relative speed at which barriers were broken down and a “safe space” was created. Comments reflected the creative artists’ role in this, and how each had created an environment where inhibitions could be shed. Observational data demonstrated multiple examples of the creative artists’ encouragement to individual participants, and through full involvement themselves, the whole group was “in it together”.

Focus group feedback suggested that undertaking creative activity such as this was reminiscent of being a child, and that being given permission to play, removed professional boundaries, creating a sense of

community.

An energizing and hilarious way to break down barriers and get the group participating, whilst encouraging everyone to engage with confidence

Definitely the session took you out of your comfort zone but in a safe environment

This has been an extraordinary two days, jam packed with inspiring, exciting and thought provoking experiences...I felt fully able to explore, play and learn and go beyond my usual safe zone

Observational data would support participant feedback, with many instances across the two days where participants explored and experimented both individually and as part of a group, with the tools and techniques they had been exposed to.

On day one, participants felt comfortable to explore characterisation in the comedy taster session and during the creative imagination session. When participants were invited to create their own sounds during the music workshop, they did so, exploring different sounds through clapping and body percussion. Activities invited and allowed safe exploration and testing of own skills in undertaking these creative approaches, which was emphasised further on day two where performance pieces were created. The creative artists supported the process, but left space for the groups to self-organise and direct the work; “it’s up to you how you want to work it”. This not only resulted in a safe space, but also impacted on confidence of participants in adopting and practicing techniques.

Feedback within the focus group session also highlighted the advantages of bringing diverse communities such as researchers and healthcare professionals together, and how this facilitates removal of perceived barriers across different professional sectors and roles. Comments referenced the new insights this had brought into what creative artists can offer and bring to the healthcare environment. Creative artists also referenced the reciprocity of learning during the residential, and how this had impacted their professional thinking:

You were all open minded enough to come to this event in the first place and that makes a massive difference to people like us...it’s amazing that there’s a shift in healthcare in trying to present and deliver differently...it’s never a one way learning process, so to learn from you has been amazing too...I appreciate you massively being here, a field that has nothing to do with what I do on a daily basis...learning even a tiny bit about what you do is massive for me for my growth as a musician and a performer so it’s a two way street definitely.

7.1.2 Increased personal confidence

Linked to the previous theme, pushing participants beyond their own comfort zones and exposing them to new and novel approaches had a personal impact on confidence and self-belief.

Participants reported feeling more confident even during the day one activities, and had been surprised at the way in which they had shed their inhibitions. The activities allowed them to

explore things they had not before, and led to personal revelation about their own abilities and skills.

Ok, I just learned that I could stand on stage, it was amazing! I didn't know that I could do that but I can!

It was amazing to see how ideas which started on the back of the proverbial fag packet could be fleshed out into ten minute shows incorporating songs, music and dancing with everyone working really well together.

I really think we could consider doing a silly little play as an introduction, to make people laugh and make ourselves seem human!

Observational data recorded many instances of confident and positive engagement with the process across activities. All participants took part in all activities across the course of the residential, to include the final group performances. Participants displayed open and positive body language throughout with eye contact, laughter and agreement to participate in all activities. Additionally, the range of activities required dancing, singing, movement and characterization, which were both reactively and spontaneously undertaken by participants. However, in developing performance pieces, some anxieties and concerns were observed particularly where participants felt they were unsure of their role, timing, characterization or the order of the performance piece.

Focus group feedback highlighted participants developing belief in applying creative arts. The sessions and performance time had reportedly helped people to see what could be achieved, and reminded some participants of the range of skills they possessed. This was reinforced by the creative artists who reflected to the participants that they already possessed the skills necessary to generate and take part in performance pieces.

7.1.3 Shifting perspectives and new insights

Across the workshops, participants were exposed to a range of tools and techniques, which allowed them to gain new insights and shift their perspective from researcher, to patient or member of the public. This shift in perspective was encouraged through the creative process by the creative artists providing the opportunity for participants to experience the world through a different frame of reference. For example, in exploring the way a script is written for an audience, or a character is developed, or utilising sound or physicality to convey meaning or a message.

The novel activities undertaken across the taster sessions allowed participants to consider the messages of their work and research from a different perspective. Strong metaphors were used as parallels in post-it board

Spotlight on Music and Rhythm

The use of sound to convey meaning was explored in a group activity where participants created rhythmic sounds by clapping and using their bodies to create percussion.

Participants experienced how the success of this depends on effective teamwork. Participants also explored use of sound via singing and creating a musical piece with their voices. **Key learning: using sounds as messages, music as metaphor, team working, the use of sound as narrative.**

feedback and in observation of conversation during activities. For example, exploring musical scores as a healthcare professional had parallels with how the public or wider audiences might engage with health research or communications. Similarly, participants saw parallels between the art of conducting an orchestra or choir, and the leadership of research, for example; bringing together groups for grant applications or shared projects.

Fantastic analogy to look at how to conduct research. The planning, what goes into it and the actual end product. Takes a lot of hard work but thinking about this from different perspectives made it more interesting.

Great way to really think about what your story/report is really about, who it is for and what language you therefore need to use to share the story and ensure it is understood

The use of musical scores and asking researchers to read them asks questions. It really translates into what public members 'see' at first sight of research.

All activities were set within the context of not only exploring the different art forms, but also within the theme of communication. Feedback from participants as well as observational data, reflected new insights in terms of the broader theme of communication and communicating messages more effectively. For example, when learning circus skills such as plate spinning, juggling and Diablo it was important for participants to give information to team members to effectively pass the balls or plates. This helped participants to consider the “language” in which they conveyed their research messages and the metaphorical ways in which the creative activity could relate to their work. Participants referenced plates spinning, and too many balls in the air, as a good physical representation of the complexities of communicating a message, and supported reflection in terms of how complex messages should be broken down to facilitate better receipt and understanding.

Shifts in perspective were also referenced on a personal level for those taking part. References were made to feeling enlightened by the activities that had been explored, and that there had been a broader impact in terms of individuals thinking.

What we've done in the last two days has been an outer journey but there's a massive inner journey going on as well. The process gives me something, creates a shift in myself...it's really hard to measure

Its' been very disruptive to my thinking process and there's loads of things to take away, and I have been reminded of the things I know, and instead of holding them in here, I am going to bring them out.

I just want to bring this to life now...everything I see now is just black and white...I want to give it energy, both the way I am myself, but also the way I present the work I have done.

7.1.4 An environment for co-creation

As referenced in section 1.1 the creative artists enabled a “safe space” which supported participants to tap into their own skills, and experiment with creative activities. Observational data from day two demonstrates the ways in which this laid a foundation and created a platform for co-creation during the development of performance pieces. In several observations participants generated ideas for their performance pieces, either in terms of character development and physical movements or for specific scenes and contexts for the performance. Dialogue recorded shows the ways in which the creative artists then helped to enhance these ideas by supporting participants to use different approaches, tools and techniques. For example, helping participants to utilise abstract approaches, reminding them of techniques for script development, and giving advice on how to develop characters with stronger comedic impact.

Day two offered greater free space where participants began to explore and direct activity with support of the artists’ to build and shape the performance elements.

Participants increasingly self-directed and supported each other to develop their characters, movements and performances. The creative artists inspired belief and confidence in the participants about the direction of the performance piece by continually adding and building to help shape their ideas. The impact of this in terms of producing the final performance pieces was referenced within the focus group:

Very quietly and orchestrating and making it work, were the creatives. The input you’re giving shouldn’t be underestimated...ours would have been a blurry mess without the four of your weaving it together and making it coherent

The creative artists were also learning to co-create with each other. As the creative team was a newly formed team, observational data reflected differences in approach to the creative process, which at times created some challenges in reaching consensus on approach. This appeared to have no negative impact on outcome, but highlights an interesting learning point about the process and the wider impact of bringing a group of individual creative artists together to work collaboratively. In this respect, the theme of co-creation is referenced here not only in relation to participants and creatives, but also amongst the creative artists themselves.

Spotlight on Script Writing

In the script writing taster session participants were exposed to a structure for writing a Hollywood movie, where a central conflict was at the core of the script. Participants worked in pairs to identify the conflict and build an outline for a story and character development. **Key learning: The importance of engaging narrative, developing characters, telling a story, consideration of your audience when writing.**

7.1.5 Enhancing personal development

Observational and in-the moment feedback demonstrated a number of areas of wider personal development for participants. Comments referenced the creative imagination session as supporting better understanding of how to focus before presenting, and how to be “in the moment” during delivery of messages. Similarly feedback on the musical and circus skills sessions

reflected that the messages of listening and communicating clearly with colleagues had been reinforced. In the music ensemble session the metaphor of conducting a choir or orchestra was utilised, to demonstrate what information is needed to lead/conduct the musical score correctly. Participants reflected the leadership learning and importance of effective team working to enable the musical score to work.

Activities undertaken created an environment where participants could demonstrate their own leadership and effective team working behaviours, for example working on a group performance piece where participants began to generate their own ideas, and work collectively to create this. Participants utilised a range of visible leadership behaviours to enable this to happen. For example; facilitation, utilisation of coaching questions, authenticity in relation to self and others, inclusivity and support and challenge. Where participants showed anxieties or confusion in preparation for performances, other members of the group often supported them by sharing their knowledge or ideas. The impact of this broader team and personal development was referenced by participants in reflections and in the moment feedback. In some cases there was recognition of the direct benefit this had to professional working, and to the development of research;

It was a concrete opportunity to work with colleagues on a joint output in a fun and creative way but is also enabling us to think more clearly about how we pitch our research to local communities. We will use this output in our work and continue to find other ways to work together on joint projects.

7.1.6 Applicability – An emerging picture

Participants felt inspired by the range of creative skills and techniques they had been exposed to. The ways in which their new learning could be utilised was still an emerging picture, but they reported feelings of inspiration and renewed enthusiasm for considering activity within their professional roles. Observational and reflective data would suggest that some of the activity was more easily identified as having an obvious link to, or use in research. Others were more difficult to “translate”. Reflective feedback and short one-to-one interviews on the day as well as the focus group on day two demonstrated the multitude of ideas that participants had left with, but that their direct application to research was yet to be understood;

I recorded some thoughts, however jumbled...swimming up and down in the pool on Sunday morning, ideas started to flow and tangible ideas of how to apply the new learning started to emerge

I liked the template for story-telling based on Hollywood films, I'm not sure yet how this might apply to the rip-roaring world of clinical audits, but I think there are some good stories in there if one is prepared to dig hard enough

I gained something from all of them – some more directly applicable to my own planned work – but all workshops balanced each other and all were

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Spotlight on Comedy

“What are you doing?” Was an example of the kind of activity explored during the comedy session. Participants had to act-out what they were doing and other members of the group had to copy them. This was spontaneous and encouraged physical actions to portray both character and meaning. **Key learning: confidence to “act”, use of humour, spontaneity in communication.**

important in guiding my creative journey and in powerfully illustrating how to draw an audience in, communicate messages and give others the confidence to engage

Participants also referenced ideas for the use of the activities undertaken, beyond research, for example as ice breakers in group work, when working with colleagues or the public or in facilitation and training. In addition, one participant reported incorporating techniques into a teaching session between the residential and the first workshop session.

Guided exploration of applicability within research and within the healthcare environment more generally,

took place during the academic session at the end of day one. Group discussions considered how the skills experienced could be applied across the whole research process from application to dissemination, as well as the added value this brings. Key themes from discussions across the groups can be seen in Graphic 3. Participants could see the benefits that the arts brought to the research process, particularly in terms of doing things differently and helping to make things memorable. There had been recognition that the arts helped to “tell a story” and in doing so, made things accessible and more impactful for the public. At this stage however, participants still had questions about “how” some of the activity could be applied in their roles and in the context of their research specifically.

I did continually question, how would this help a researcher? I had a fear that people would just feel that they had developed some new art or creative skills that would not be of obvious use to them

Graphic 3: Application of Creative Arts to the Research Process

Application and Recruitment

Using creative approaches for applications for funding. To better engage the public in the recruitment process, using approaches that “speak their language”.

Dissemination

Helping with more impactful dissemination, communicating key outcomes to the public in an accessible way. E.g. film, photos, art, performance

Co-design and Co-production

Using activities and tools for engaging with Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) groups and communities to formulate research questions and areas for consideration.

During the focus group and academic session, comments from the creative team demonstrated a broader view on the application of learning from the residential. Whilst the importance of being able to directly apply learning was appreciated, the creative team reiterated the importance of the creative process, and the learning that can be gained from exposure to the arts. For example, by encouraging broader thinking and novel approaches, and helping participants to think differently about approaches to engagement

and communication;

Something might be deemed to be useful if there is some sort of outcome or product based on your thinking...something empirical and tangible...but if there's one thing us creatives can't avoid, it's that sometimes the product is the process.

We talked about today, we don't expect you to go out and do a full circus piece, but it's about pushing those skills and having the confidence to look at different approaches

(It's) about giving yourself permission to explore...and if it's useful, great, if it's not then you haven't wasted your time because you've explored it and you can just move on to something else.

7.1.7 Inspiration versus trepidation

During the academic session, participants discussed the application of creative activity in research and communication within the health setting. Whilst some general ideas were generated (see section 6. 1.6) there were a number of references indicating that this approach was very much “walking on the edge.” Participants discussed how in order for its relevance to be more widely recognised, there was a need for advocates to be “bilingual”, helping to make it a little more mainstream and translating its usefulness to other colleagues and institutions. Linked to this was the idea that mixing traditional with creative approaches within the research process may help in this translation. The need to engage clinical colleagues in understanding what the creative arts could offer was also seen as a key enabler for novel artistic approaches.

Building an evidence base for this approach in all aspects of research was also discussed. Participants recognised the value this would have in demonstrating the possibilities and scope of these approaches, with those who have more traditional views.

(we) need to do something first to demonstrate...modest pieces of work first...then team up to look at results and insights and then we can start to build a way of using this.

The ACM feels focused on personal development and skills, which is great, but...we need to be able to argue for its relevance and credibility amongst those who are skeptical

Spotlight on Creative Imagination

Participants were encouraged to step into an imaginative situation, using the senses to build a sense of reality in an imagined scenario. Participants built their own imagined world in a range of scenarios from standing in a kitchen preparing food, to standing on the edge of a building. **Key learning: the power of imagination, how the senses can be used more explicitly to focus, how to focus before presenting or public speaking**

The sense of trepidation in moving forward was also echoed on a personal level in participant reflections:

Being open minded certainly helped me

enjoy the workshops...but I also feel a certain

amount of trepidation...will what feels enjoyable among an audience of supportive people doing the same thing, feel very different among complete strangers?

Key Learning Points from the Residential:

Creative artists supported participants to explore by **creating a “safe space”** for learning to take place

The safe environment **allowed co-creation to take place**

Participants were able to **explore the broader concept of communication**, and conveying messages utilising creative approaches

Participants **recognised parallels** between the research process and creative activity, and undertaking the creative activity **helped them to reframe and consider the public’s perspective**

Participants experienced an **increase in confidence** after the residential exposure

Participants were **inspired to utilise the tools** and techniques they had explored and could see some **opportunities for application** of their learning

Activities offered an opportunity to develop and enhance **personal leadership and team-working skills**

Participants left the event inspired and considering “how” to apply this in their professional roles, with a sense of both inspiration and trepidation

8. Highlights of the Journey – From Inspiration to Action

8.1 Development of workshops and performance - a note on process

The residential had “sowed seeds (and) laid foundations” for participants and set the scene for the continuing workshops. Between the March residential and the April workshop, the NHS R&D NW and creative teams’ met to reflect and design the approach to the follow on workshops. It was decided to approach the April workshop as an opportunity to re-engage with the creative activities, and begin exploring how the participants wanted to work, as well as which artists they may wish to work more closely with. This would be guided by some creative-led facilitated activity, as well as input from participants in groups to work through potential ideas.

Going forward from the April workshop, mentors were allocated so that when participants came back in May, they were working specifically with a creative artist they had identified. An emergent and iterative process continued, with the majority of time at the workshops being set aside to work on individual pieces with mentors. Mentor allocation was not exclusive however, and across the five workshops mentors increasingly worked with a range of groups and individuals to support specific aspects of the work they were doing, bringing in different expertise and advice to the participants from their relative disciplines. Mentors were allocated between the April and May workshops based on indicated preference of participants. As well as individual development and rehearsal time, at the end of most workshops a slot was allocated to sharing progress and development of pieces with the wider group, to offer feedback and input from the whole community.

At the April workshop, participants elected to work on individual pieces as opposed to one group performance for the conference. Three groups were established, and the remaining participants worked individually on their pieces. Participants suggested submitting short outlines of their ideas to the creative team, so that they could understand more about what each group/individual was trying to achieve. By the May workshop, one of the groups (the NHS R&D NW team) invited all participants to be part of their “group” to develop a focal performance piece for the conference. From May whole group rehearsal of this featured as part of each workshop also. The September workshop was allocated as the dress rehearsal session with a full run through of participant pieces taking place. The first day of the annual Let’s Talk Research conference would host the performances from each member of the Academy of Creative Minds. (See appendix 1 for a short summary of each creative piece). Between each workshop, the NHS R&D NW team and the creative artists met as a group to consider learning from the prior workshop and to discuss approach to the forthcoming workshop. Participants worked independently across the space between workshops, but also accessed support from mentors if needed via email and calls.

The following section explores some of the highlighted themes across the workshops, capturing the progression in terms of participant learning and also the development of creative pieces.

Building on the insights from data captured at the residential, themes will make reference to the full data set and will explore the impact for participants and creative artists as well as reflect continued learning about process.

8.2 Insights from this leg of the journey

8.2.1 The value of creative mentors and collaboration

Throughout the observational data and reflections submitted, there were multiple references to the value that the creative artists brought to the creative pieces that were being developed. This theme is characterised by the support and encouragement given from the creative artists, the practical tools and techniques observed and reported and the ways in which creative artists both enhanced and shaped the ideas and creative pieces developed by participants.

8.2.1.1 Tools and techniques

Participants referenced continued examples of how the creatives gave practical advice and guidance on both process and specific tools and techniques, which would enhance the development of their work. Observational data would echo this where examples of continued input to developing broader performance skills were displayed throughout each workshop. Observations captured examples of techniques and tips being shared to enhance writing and script development, vocal performance and comedic aspects of performance. Creatives would often provide explanation as to why something was suggested related to their relevant discipline, helping participants to feel comfortable when undertaking activity and exploring different aspects of performance. Often these were subtle comments and asides, some specific examples are; advice on mouth shaping to effectively hold a note and create a larger sound; describing what staging might look like so that performance could be contextualised; giving insights into the audience perspective;

There are so many ways, using performance or theatrical techniques you could use here. You could do the whole thing as mime...making puppets...you can literally do anything and it will work

(Reflecting on a script read through) Then you go into scientific words, and totally bamboozle them with science...then you've got to drop the big one...jokes are funnier in three's, and the third time you drop the big one where you just say a whole sentence in scientific speak...

There's ways we can make that a little more interesting, by dividing our choir in two, so we can echo certain parts...

...that's when clowning is really good. When I believe I am going to jump into that glass of water...because I can...and because you're committed to it, the audience are like "oh my god she's going to do it"...so it's committing to it and being truthful within it...

Creatives connected to other stimuli and genres to help participants think differently about their work, and strong use of imagery and metaphor were recorded. Bringing in broader ideas from areas such as film, performance, and musical techniques for example, helped participants to see things differently and in the broader context of effective and impactful communication.

8.2.1.2 Encouragement and support

Creatives also provided regular reassurance and encouragement across workshops, allowing people to feel more comfortable and confident in trying out new skills. Observations recorded multiple examples where participants were “acting out” or experimenting with characterisation and supportive comments and feedback helped participants to feel less self-conscious or nervous. In a number of observations specific reassurance was given that “it’s ok to fail” and go wrong, as this makes a connection with the audience. This was also advantageous at times where the creative process appeared uncomfortable or daunting for participants:

So let’s just walk it through, and here it doesn’t matter if this doesn’t work work...this is just for you as an individual to walk it through and find your way it...it doesn’t matter...we find our way, we fumble through...in rehearsal we fall over

There are many ways to do it, as it’s an artistic endeavor, there isn’t a best way, it’s whatever you want to do.

Think about it...an open mouth helps open the sound...you should be like that (demonstrates), like you’re about to eat an apple...be brave, I know we are asking you to do something not normally in your comfort area...

I just want to throw in ideas you can use at any point...I just want to demystify the idea that creatives have this special thing...I was just trained to think about creating things in this way...

Creatives helped participants to feel more comfortable in the creative process and provided reassurance about progress made; encouraging participants not to move on too quickly when spending time exploring ideas. Some specific examples observed included reiterating the importance of fully exploring and developing characters first, reassuring about time spent on storyboarding and moving on to physically marking out performance in the performance space.

7.2.1.3 Taking ideas to the next level

Reflections and observational data demonstrated the role of the creative mentors in further developing or enhancing emerging ideas. Creatives often interjected with ideas to stimulate thinking and to enhance ideas put forward. Observational data showed that ideas were not always fully formed, but were utilised to spark conversation and discussion with participants. In this way, particularly as creative ideas developed, participants were encouraged to “play” with ideas and suggestions, rather than having one preferred or isolated way of approaching things.

Examples from observations included enhancing characterisation, exploring movement in the group song performance, advice on structuring scripts and placement of comedy as well as context-setting ideas. Participants reflected on the value of this support in developing their pieces:

During the day I felt that we had made good progress, and that the insights and support from the mentors really helped to move this performance along

On this occasion we had a more successful day as we spent time developing ideas with (our) mentor...without that I think we would have floundered longer

I've found I dislike having my ideas questioned or changed...however even during the session I realised my mentor knows what she's talking about – she's the professional after all – and her ideas definitely improved what I am working on

Towards the end of the programme in reflective pieces, participants overtly referenced the value of the relationship with the creative mentors, in terms of both the development of their creative pieces, but also in terms of broader personal learning and development. Participants reflected on the positive impact of working so closely with creative mentors and appreciated the time dedicated from the mentors involved:

It has been a momentous and life-transforming journey and I have enormously enjoyed working with (creative). You have been an inspiration and my creative journey has been enriched from your involvement and guidance

Observational data reflected how the creative artists used open, coaching style questions to tap into the knowledge that participants had regarding their areas of interest. In early workshops this was helpful in developing understanding between participants and creative mentors in terms of the stimulus and context for the creative pieces being developed. The creative artists delved into participant's ideas, really unpicking the foundations for their creative pieces:

An example of an exchange between creative and participant to develop characterisation;

Creative: What shall we call her?

Participant: Amina

Creative: So tell me about her, how old are we going to make her?

Participant: Let's make her 63

Creative: Where does she live?

Participant: She lives in Birmingham

Creative: Who does she live with?

Participant: Her husband, her son and her daughter in law, and grandkids

The creative artists continually tied back to tools, techniques and further ideas to connect the developing ideas into something more tangible in terms of performance, characterisation, and script or film development. This was evident in multiple interchanges between creative mentors and participants, and the creative re-framing that artists provided was an enabler to the development of participants' pieces:

What we're doing is giving the actor things to think about, they won't be seen at all, but if you're going to use this creativity in the future...if you're going to work with actors, you're giving them something to really create the character you want

So these are your main messages...but I am getting that your main thing is the individual first hand experiences would be really cool to get across...I am seeing a couple of monologues...you are these women

You've all talked about at various different points, little things that can change...so the appointment system, if you could get through more easily, if you could rock up and be in a secluded area and talk to a receptionist that isn't going to interrogate you on your whole medical history and then put you through to a doctor who is then going to listen to what you have to say...so you've got lots of little ideas that can be the successes and little changes

Creative mentors helped to shape ideas and enhance performance through practical application of the tools and techniques they suggested. The sharing of this professional knowledge and insights appeared to support and invite participants to try different approaches, and to learn about the range of things they could do. Some of these initial ideas and suggestions were further developed independently by participants to become part of their final pieces.

8.2.1.4 Shaping and guiding the process

Observational data reflects the key role creative artists had in shaping and guiding the creative process for the programme, as well as in supporting participants and this was particularly evident in the latter workshops during rehearsal and preparation for performance at the conference. Creative artists stepped into more 'arbitrary' roles helping to direct staging, running order, prop lists and other logistical aspects of performances and presentation of participants work. These roles started to emerge in the July session where running order was discussed. Although there were no formal agreements of who would do what at this stage, the creative artists contributed and displayed a broader range of skills here in helping to support the whole group to be performance ready.

During the September workshop the creative artists demonstrated this further, stepping in to advise on further work required by participants to be performance ready. As these roles were arbitrary, some creatives were more involved in this process, naturally taking on roles to get the individual pieces into a whole performance.

At a late stage, the creatives stepped in to advise on changes to participants' work for increased impact. For example, during the rehearsal, advising on better ways to come on and off stage, or offering new suggestions on how to portray characters in performance. Musical aspects were also suggested and added during later stages to enhance the performance of less physical pieces. This was well received by participants and the collaborative approach to shaping their pieces was referenced in participant reflections.

8.2.2 Exploring the creative process

This theme is characterised by the participants' and creative teams' experiences of the creative process and reflects sub themes describing the dichotomy of a need for structure, versus the emergent creative process; the differences in creative approach, and the ways in which the team approached the development of creative pieces.

8.2.2.1 Structure versus emergent

Early in the workshops, particularly in April there were multiple observations and reflections on the perceived lack of prior plan in terms of approach to the workshops. This was reflected from both creatives and participants and there were mixed views in terms of how the time could have been spent at the April workshop. For some participants, group time exploring ideas together was helpful in terms of developing their own ideas and cross-pollinating from others. However, for others they wanted to spend the time on their individual pieces. Re-visiting some of the creative activities from the residential, whilst welcomed by some participants, felt like repetition to others. Creative feedback from the April session also referenced the need for clarity in terms of the direction of travel for the remainder of the programme, in order to make most use of the time, and the need for space for the creative team to decide on best approach to supporting the development of participant-led pieces. Creatives reflected some concern about how the participants may perceive this, whilst also acknowledging the emergent nature of the creative process:

I mainly want the participants to feel that they are in safe hands and that there is some sort of plan, I feel like that might be important to them. I might be wrong and perhaps seeing the workings out of the creative is equally as valid!

At times I was very concerned about the lack of consistency in terms of expectation and engagement across the different artistic disciplines...I think we can be more rigorous in our use of time at certain moments, but I also think that we can't learn to do that until we have figured out more about how ACM engagements are meant to work.

Participants demonstrated understanding that this was not a traditional learning environment and that much of the process was emergent.

There were however, references from April and May reflections and from observational data that identified a desire for more of a plan, or structure in terms of how the sessions would go forward. The participants questioned the use of time and whether the “balance” was right in terms of time spent on whole group activity versus individual pieces. There was an observable tension between how far participants were happy to “feel their way” when exploring the creative process, and the desire for a more structured approach which was also fed back via reflective pieces;

(I) felt it could have benefited from more of a structure/plan to get the most of the days committed to this. Until someone suggested producing summaries before the next session, there seemed to be some uncertainty about how this was all going to progress and move forward

...a little more clarity as to how we might work together as a group to open the conference – I appreciate this is relatively early on in the process, but ‘trying on’ some templates for potential performance might be useful to gather and filter ideas

I have not experienced a course such as this before. Normally there is a fairly well defined curriculum to follow. I understand this is not the concept behind the Academy but I think by the time we came to the workshop, some sort of curriculum could have been developed

Observational data would support the comments above, where at times it was evident that the open-ended nature of the creative process and approach to the workshops was uncomfortable for some. This was in some ways alleviated by continued reassurance from the creative artists, helping individuals build self-belief and confidence in what they were doing. Some of this was overt in their language with positive affirmations and feedback such as “you can do anything, there is no one way”, “its ok to fail” at other times it was more practical in terms of reassurance of process. The creative artists had a key role here in terms of reassuring about process, as they encouraged participants not to “over think it” and to “try things out”. As time progressed participants became more comfortable with the open space, and self-directed nature of the workshops. As they began to map their own “creative process” participants were observed proactively finding ways to deal with new challenges, trying out new ideas and concepts and considering the practicalities of their performance or film. This is explored further in section 2.3.

Observational data would suggest that the emergent process also raised some questions later in the programme about further resource required to support participants with the development of their creative pieces. In later workshops for example, there were some requests for external filming, recruitment of actors, need for props and staging for some pieces. Creative artists proposed ways of doing this at minimal cost, and the exploration of these possibilities were undertaken between the creative team and NHS R&D NW.

Observations collected in June, July and September note the amount of work people perceived they still had to do to become performance ready. Reflective pieces also referenced the amount of work carried out in-between sessions by both participants and the creative teams. At times, things appeared rushed to polish both individual performances and the group song;

..things felt a bit rushed towards the end of the day. I am looking forward to singing the song at the start of the conference but it would have been good to have a bit more time to rehearse it and to give a demonstration of everyone's pieces at the end.

When the dress rehearsal took place in September this was the first time that some of the performances and films were seen in full by creative mentors, and the first time some participants had been able to work with other mentors to access their specialist advice. Some participants had progressed well in the self-directed space, whereas observational data would suggest that others found this more difficult. The creatives identified that further shaping and advice was needed to support some participants to be performance ready and this led to a purposeful intervention with creatives targeting specific participants to support in the most effective way. Some significant changes were made in the final stages of rehearsal and observations would suggest that there were some anxieties at this point across both participants and the creative team.

With an emergent creative process, participants fluctuated between confidence in the new world they were experiencing and anxiety about whether their skills could be applied in the performance space. Reflective and observational data reflected continued questions in terms of how things were progressing, and whether they were making enough progress, whether things be ready in time for the conference and how they would practically work together on the group piece. This is explored in greater detail in section 2.3 below.

8.2.2.2 Creative differences in process

Working with multiple mentors was hugely valued by participants, and experiencing the variety of approaches to the creative process was appreciated;

What was good was that working through the options and talking with (creative artist 1) we changed our plan quite significantly and were able to feel confident about a new outline...it was good that (creative artist 2) was then able to advise us on character development and how to use humour...this stimulated further thought on my part after the event.

At times reflective and observational data demonstrated that this could also be challenging when approaches or advice differed and changed the direction of the piece. In reflective feedback participants shared their insight into how difficult it can be to accept creative challenge, even when they knew this would be better for the development of their work.

References were made to the personal investment in the development of creative pieces, and that this personal investment of time and ideas was difficult to “let go” and allow others to co-create and shape their work;

In the end we completely rewrote it, which was quite a challenging – and interesting – process. It was interesting to go back to first principles and try to come up with something more dramatically interesting and it was great fun thinking about characters backstories...what we finished up with was definitely more interesting and entertaining

(the) different perspectives on my project not only challenged but inspired new thought processes and really made me look at what was/is both extraneous and essential in getting my message across. I did not always agree but this was a healthy exchange and helped cut out the chaff.

The day was very intense with learning how to act and be directed and the script I'd written not quite turning out as I expected...but I realised these changes are good; it's a good idea to stretch yourself and try out new things in case you find something you enjoy that you'd never realised before.

Differences in approach were also reflected from some members of the creative team as they experienced the different ways of working with their creative team members. Observational data would also reflect some of the challenges creative artists experienced in co-creating alongside other artists within the programme. Difference in approach was reflected as valuable in terms of learning and exposure, but the challenges this can sometimes bring in a collaborative environment were also referenced;

The ACM as a whole continues to make progress but the ways in which we artists were trying to engage...was occasionally well pitched and occasionally less well-conceived. It was clear that we were going to need more time for working practice to emerge.

In the later workshops, this was more evident as work progressed in earnest between mentors and their participants. Observations found that in some instances this could lead to a more siloed approach with some groups/participants.

Observations and reflective data also highlighted questions about how the musical element fit into the overall programme. Reflections noted that other elements may be easier for participants to directly apply, and that in continued programmes there would be a need to “make room” for the musical element to emerge and support in its own right. Observational data suggests that the music element started to have more of a focal point as the group song developed to open the conference, and also when performances were rehearsed in the September workshop. Both creative artists and participants appeared to more readily identify how music could be used to accentuate and punctuate other pieces for example, during a monologue being delivered, to create atmosphere and enhance the impact of what was being said.

8.2.3 Increasing confidence

This theme was well evidenced across data sets, and is characterised by participants increasing confidence in application of their learning, as well as the fluctuations between confidence and anxiety and questions of credibility as participants explored their new skills;

8.2.3.1 Confidence in application of learning

There was clear movement for participants in terms of their confidence as they were exposed to new things and explored in more detail the creative process in relation to the pieces they were developing. Confidence to apply creative techniques were more evident as time progressed across the workshops as participants produced scripts, storyboards, monologues and songs in co-creation with creatives and other participants. Observational data demonstrated a range of circumstances where participants went beyond their own personal perceived “boundaries” and this was also evident in reflections from participants, which demonstrated a shift in terms of their own perspective of self. For example, participants reported their surprise at being able to sing songs when they believed they couldn’t sing, and feeling “creative” when they never believed they were. The programme was allowing new insights as well as continued exploration of these new skills;

ACM is watering and feeding a seed, which sprouted at the residential and is now flourishing. Ideas are popping up and growing like a bushy green plant...I feel like it could take on a giant (metaphorically speaking of course!) My confidence and enjoyment of presenting within the group continues to grow

I didn't go away thinking I could write a monologue, the words just came...what surprised me more than anything is that I was really proud of myself and I wanted to share it

I was also appointed the director of the film we were beginning to produce which was a new experience for me as well. I've never directed anything before...I'm quite looking forward to it...another new experience that I might ultimately enjoy.

I have always told myself that I don't have the sort of brain that can memorise large amounts of information...the flaw in my thinking was to assume that this is an innate skills that some have and others don't. True, its not easy for me – but it is something I can master with hours of grueling practice...the whole process has shown me how much I can achieve when I put my mind to it...there are all sorts of assumptions about what we can and can't do...many of which are just myths.

I never thought I would do this...I thought how do you portray things in music and acting and juggling...and as time went by and we were learning from the workshops...it wasn't easy, it wasn't straight forward but with everybody's help, I came up with a message that portrays my whole big thesis, it's just amazing. It's something I would never have foreseen or imagined or thought were possible....

What perhaps surprised me was how unconfident I felt going into the course...and sense that I have

gained more confidence through taking part in an ongoing process with a group of likeminded people...after attending a session I generally feel more refreshed and motivated.

In reflective feedback, and observational data, participants referenced many instances of feeling more confident either at a personal level or in the application of new skills, tools or techniques learned. The approach to the residential had helped to support risk taking and stepping outside of comfort zones and the further group activities that took place as warm ups and energisers in follow on workshops continued to create this atmosphere. People showed a willingness to be vulnerable, undertaking group activities, which were energizing and stimulating and encouraged “silliness”. Reflections and observational data demonstrated some sense of nostalgia for participants as they explored game-like energisers. Participants felt free to explore and “play” and there were indicators that this freedom in creative space was having an impact on confidence and broader personal development;

Having been professional for all of my career and “playing” the role, it is fantastic to be able to be free to think outside the box...

Confident use of creative techniques was evident from the May workshop onwards. Observational data showed the increasing number of instances where in development of pieces, participants would not only discuss their scripts, songs, films, but would apply their learning by situating themselves as characters, and talking through ideas in character. In some instances this became a device to shift perspective for example, to understand the patient or public perspective in relation to the pieces they were developing. In addition, observations reflected participants experimenting with different voices and further characterisation to explore different approaches to the character/s they had created. This was also evident in observations of the musical aspects of the workshop, where participants spontaneously sang lyrics to explore tune and rhythm;

Today helped to silence some of my gremlins. I found it empowering and yet daunting to learn the song and sing and be choreographed all in the space of perhaps 3 hours. It was exhausting and yet a fantastic medium in which to learn. I also didn't care that I am tone deaf!!

In July and September workshops participants began exploring their pieces in more depth and instances were recorded where participants questioned the characters (“would she do that?” or “how could her character do that convincingly?”), the storyline or the movements applied to their pieces, suggesting heightened confidence in constructing ideas and performances.

In later workshops it was evident that participants had taken pointers or advice from the creative teams, but worked in-between sessions to then refine the work either individually or in groups, experimenting with the techniques and devices they had been exposed to (for example script development, comedic devices, staging tips or character development). Participants reported being pushed beyond their own personal boundaries, and it appeared that the diversity of creative mediums exposed to, enabled participants to explore in their own way; finding the creative mediums that most worked for them. In

some circumstances, this meant actually becoming a character in a performance, for others it meant exploring how to storyboard or direct a film.

8.2.3.2 Fluctuations between confidence and fear

It is important to acknowledge that in equal measure to participants increased confidence both personally and in terms of applying the creative skills they were learning, there were continued references demonstrating a fluctuation from confidence and self-belief, to questioning whether goals could be achieved. This became more evident as workshops progressed and the reality of performance approached. The workshops were perceived as a safe space, and moving their pieces from the “safe space” to the performance space was of concern to participants;

...there are still a lot of issues in making this a reality...there is also some tension between making something entertaining and something that will be taken seriously...a bit like tightrope walking it's great if you can pull it off but there is a risk of falling off and humiliating yourself too.

I was concerned before coming to the day that we'd missed the previous session...I was worried we were lagging behind in progress...Watching the performances at the end I again became worried about how far behind we were and if our plans were too ambitious.

I began to see this would be a performance and I would not be able to hide behind anything...I don't think I can memorise it all...all a bit subdued – brave new world thing with a bit of realisation of what I have let myself in for!!

There was a sense across all data sets during the later workshops, that the reality of performing and showing pieces to an audience was setting in and the hard work required both between and within workshops was evident. In the September workshop observational data noted some of the verbalised anxieties when undertaking a full run through of everyone's performances and creative pieces. For some participants this was the first time their work had been presented to the group and it was observable that there were some anxieties in both performing but also, in terms of the further fine tuning they may need to undertake in order to be performance ready.

Several reflections outlined the hard work required across the creative process and the perceived enormity of the work required to achieve a quality performance was evident in participants thinking. In July and September workshops it was clear how much work participants were putting in to their pieces in-between sessions, either in terms of further filming, rehearsal days, prop and costume design, and also liaising with the creative team. The level of personal commitment from participants appeared high, and the focus of the conference for the unveiling of their creative pieces was reflected as a helpful factor in progressing with their work. In later workshops, creative artists' reflections also echoed this, and there were some concerns about the amount of work left to be done before the performance.

This became more evident in observational data from July and September workshops, for example when undertaking the initial run through of the participant pieces;

Getting to grips with the finer details of our film project proved less jolly and sociable and harder work than previous sessions. With September getting closer we were certainly more business-like as we got down to the nitty gritty of thinking about costumes, scripts...by the end I felt like we'd made good progress with each decision opening up not just new possibilities but also the potential for things to go wrong...

I'd felt nervous and responsible in the lead up to it as the enormity of the task and venue suddenly loomed in the mid-distance...as they're all heroically, operating way out of their comfort zone, the scale of the task might be...a tad over ambitious...but these are bright people and I felt heartened and reassured about how much work they had done. They have all grabbed this challenge by the lapels and are giving it a darn good go.

8.2.3.3 Questioning credibility

Linked to the personal concern, there were also a number of references to how the work would be perceived in terms of credibility. Participants and creatives referenced the novel approach as both important and impactful but there were concerns over how credible it may appear when performed outside of the boundaries of the programme;

I am just aware of the size of the task...we are putting non-performers on a huge stage, in front of bright lights and a critical audience with minimal creating and rehearsal time...it's incredibly brave

I am really anxious that the whole thing comes across properly and that the audience laughs with us in the right place, and not at us!! I am still worried about credibility and how the whole thing will be viewed at conference

There were also some subtle insights within participant reflective pieces that demonstrated the anxiety or concern over further utilising their new learning outside of the programme. Participants' demonstrated concern over "going too far" as well as how receptive some colleagues or wider circles would be. The need to "prove" the applicability of learning was also of concern for some participants;

..certainly to work with (creative artist), to see the kind of work he can do and how it can translate into what I do as well, and create a better message for me which will impact a wider audience rather than just the academics...it's stimulated my thoughts, I'm still wary of going too far...what I still can't get my head round is how I can push to colleagues...they just wouldn't get it...so I think there's a lot of preparatory work that would need doing to begin with, but it's given me more confidence to try.

...the course has taken a lot of time out so we need to be able to demonstrate to my line manager why

this time has been worth spending rather than on more immediate project priorities

8.2.4 A building sense of community

This theme explores the ongoing development of relationships within and across the group over the course of the programme. Throughout the workshops, observations and reflective data demonstrated the ongoing development of a sense of community between participants and creatives. Although this was more prevalent for some participants and creative artists than others, there were ongoing references to the impact of the Academy of Creative Minds on a sense of community.

8.2.4.1 Team-working and teambuilding

Participants' reflections demonstrated the value placed on working together from the early workshops, and this continued to grow over the course of the programme. Participants reflected the personal impact of working together and the positive impact of working beyond professional boundaries;

The work we did as a team was brilliant. I love the team building aspect of the ACM and the sense of community and collaboration that is developing

I tend to work alone a lot and sometimes find collaboration tricky but this feels good, I am happy working with other people like this. The group atmosphere is excellent, non-competitive friendly, supportive but not gushy

Within moments the group came together just as it had felt in Lancaster. Everyone was so keen, enthusiastic and friendly which helped to make a creative ambience

The team approach to the programme contributed to broader learning for participants and an opportunity to reflect on the development of their own ideas and creative pieces. Participants showed a willingness to work collaboratively, volunteering to be involved in other participants' performances and offering comments to support the development of other participants' work. This was particularly evident in April, May and June workshops. At the April workshop a slot of the agenda was designed to give participants the opportunity to discuss and shape their ideas together as a whole group and observational data recorded many instances where participants asked questions, gave suggestions and built upon others' ideas to help them consider their approach. Whilst there was a mixed reaction to this approach across reflective data, observationally this offered participants an opportunity to learn more about each other's work, as well as multiple opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas. In May and June workshops observational data recorded instances where participants were exploring both formally, and informally, the progress of their peers' creative pieces. Multiple conversations were observed where participants offered suggestions and feedback to others and offered effective questioning and reframing.

Participants increasingly showed evidence of support and direction of selves and others for example,

supporting colleagues to learn words, movements and utilisation of props. The value and impact of this was referenced in participants' reflections;

It was truly inspirational sharing other people's ideas and projects and again it inspired me to think more broadly about how I could go away and develop my ideas.

I thoroughly enjoyed a mini role in another group's presentation. It was good to be involved with another project and to learn more about their creative processes.

Great ideas from the team stimulated my thinking process and provided fresh and new ways to look at things...high quality ideas, different approaches and cross-pollination of ideas...I valued the opportunity to work with such a great group of people from different areas and disciplines.

In practical terms, observational data recorded that most time across the whole programme was spent working in individual groups or on individual pieces with mentors, rather than as a whole group. Although the team-working and team-building aspects were acknowledged across the group, they were more readily recognised by the participants who were working as part of a group on creative pieces. There were numerous references to the new insights into colleagues' skills, and the welcomed opportunity to work on something different together;

I was initially unsure how we would work in a 'team' to think creatively...however, both (colleague) and I reflected that we found it helpful to discuss ideas with each other.

Observational data and comments from reflections indicated that group activities such as warm ups and the group song, were energising and offered an opportunity for the whole group to come together. Warm ups were often physical in nature, and involved working collaboratively for example singing together in rounds to develop group sounds or creating a "human knot". Humour was often a feature in these group activities, with moments of laughter, hilarity and fun captured. Although there was some observable nervousness about undertaking these in earlier workshops, participants readily became involved and body language, facial and vocal expressions would indicate enjoyment in participation. Observationally, this appeared to create an atmosphere of collaboration and shared focus, which appeared to impact group cohesion.

Aligned to this, observational data demonstrated effective team-working behaviours across the programme, and particularly when the group spent time rehearsing the group song and accompanying movements. Participants coached each other, helping to learn movements and words alongside the formal input from the creative team, and displayed a range of citizenship behaviours such as giving time to help peers and reassuring participants when they were unsure of the words or movements. Reflective data from July and September reflected for some, the positive impact of having a focal group piece to work on together. At times however, the amount of time allocated to rehearsing this in later sessions created concern for some participants.

The impact of working collaboratively as a group also appeared to affect participants' confidence. Feeling a sense of all being in it together and seeing what others were working on, as well as getting feedback from peers reportedly gave people a sense of confidence. This was also evident in observational data from September where participants presented their work in the rehearsal session;

It was good to finally get the chance to work on our play with our whole team and find out what worked and didn't work. It felt very encouraging that everyone was so positive about what we are doing and the progress we have made.

I enjoyed learning to use my voice more effectively. I am not a natural singer and loved the opportunity to practice within such a supportive group.

The thought of performing this in front of people will have to be suppressed for the time being but we are in it together and this thought really helped.

8.2.4.2 Commitment and ownership

Participants and creatives reflected a sense of commitment and ownership in terms of the Academy of Creative Minds community and there was a sense of feeling a level of responsibility to team members;

I think my anxieties rose for a number of reasons...not wanting to let the organising team and other attendees down (who have invested their time in making the case for creative approaches to engagement).

This is a very precarious moment in the journey of our endeavor. A sobering moment where focus is the key. I am confident but cautious...for them and the brilliant NHS R&D NW team. I want them all to feel proud and will do my best to achieve that.

Another aspect of the programme which has not been referenced to this point is that the NHS R&D NW team encouraged all group members to sign up to a Google + group to enhance opportunities for participants to stay in touch and share learning. Although there was some early engagement in this, for example; participants sharing their photos, films, and ideas for their creative pieces, this did not appear to be consistently used across the course of the programme. Early interaction however, showed a willingness to share ideas and work, as well as humorous interactions between participants. Photos were shared from activities where participants were dressing up to explore characterisation, and snippets of storyboards and developing films were also shared. In some instances participants shared that they were looking forward to seeing participants at the next workshop also. This observation of online conversation suggests that participants were willing to contact other participants and share information, and even though this was not engaged with consistently, it serves as further insight into the development of relationships across the programme.

8.2.4.3 Creative collaboration

In later workshops, observational data highlighted the development and evolution of the relationships across the creative team. As time progressed there was increased cross-over in terms of the creative team roles. Mentors were working across multiple groups and individuals to support specific artistic requirements, and increasingly mentors started to work together in shaping and advising. This collaborative working was observed on a number of occasions, and particularly as the performance structure started to take shape, as well as the group song. This evolution was echoed in some creative artists' reflections. The creative team reported the value of working with other artists and positive interchanges between the team, with complementary feedback and language such as "respect" and "value" referenced. In addition, there was recognition that roles became more generic, and original artistic specialisms were less important;

We're all multi-tasking and the boundaries are truly blurred, which is wonderful. (Creative 1) is directing, I'm designing, our original roles no longer apply as we're all working in the 'any other duties' area of our job descriptions...

In reflecting on yesterday I am really pleased to be working with you guys and the fact that we have come so far as a team is actually pretty remarkable

As referenced earlier in this section of the report, there were however, some challenges in the early stages of the programme in terms of different creative approaches and methodologies.

8.2.4.4 Co-Creation between participants and creatives

As the workshops developed, observational data reflected the important interplay between the creative artists and the participants in terms of continued development of the pieces they were working on. Some of this is referenced in section 7.2.1 where the value and role of the creative artists is explored. However observational data reflected multiple examples of where this exchange and interplay led to co-created ideas, which as time went on, were much more generated from the participants initially. Creative artists allowed space for participants to explore their ideas, listening to their thoughts, looking over scripts and storyboards and ideas for song lyrics, and then asked insightful questions and provided guidance, advice and support as needed. Earlier in the process, observations reflect more direct input from the creative artists to help participants shape their ideas and explore the creative process. Creative artists supported with more technical tools and techniques in the development phase, for example giving information on storyboarding ideas and techniques for making things more comedic or shocking and tips on singing together. In this way the creative artists had an ongoing role as "shaper" to the creative pieces. There was mutual recognition that there were greater benefits in co-creation and shared exploration of ideas, which is referenced further in section 7.2.1.

In the group song, there were further instances of co-creation between participants and the creative team. The process was iterative and the song developed across the workshops. The musical creatives initially suggested phrases and a musical arrangement, but were flexible to rearrange and change the music to support easier adoption of the lyrics and notes by participants. Later in the process, participants suggested ideas for movements for the song, and ideas for staging as the performance piece changed and developed into a “flash mob” start for the conference. An example of this co-creation from the initial development of the song can be seen below;

Creative 1: If you're talking a folky speed and beat, if that's the case then we're talking sort of swingy, folk...then 'details of the Wi-Fi are on the screen' becomes a little less folky and a bit more jazz...it changes the feel of it, do you know what I mean?

Participant 1: Yes, something a bit more jovial and upbeat?

Participant 2: But not so much that it's sort of childish?

Creative 2: A little tricky to get right ...just making sure it's not trying too hard to be jazz, but still musical

Participant 2: You're right, it's about the energy. It's got to be uplifting and energetic

Creative 1: Do you want it to be a familiar tune or a familiar style? Because you've written your own words, it would be great to have your own tune...I think that's best, but it's not what I want, it's what you want.

8.2.5 The broader impact of learning

This theme is characterised by the broader personal learning and development that was observed and referenced by participants throughout the programme. Some of this, such as increased confidence, has already been explored, but this theme reflects the emerging picture of application of learning, personal learning and development and the reciprocal learning between participants and creative mentors.

8.2.5.1 Personal development and learning

Early on in the programme participants reported the challenge in understanding how the skills they had learned could be more widely applied. This continued to be a question for participants throughout the data collected, however there was recognition that learning and impact from the programme went beyond direct utilisation of the creative pieces being developed, and reflected more broadly in terms of enhanced personal and professional development. Learning at “multiple levels” was referenced by creatives and participants to describe the broader impact of learning;

Learning is a three dimensional experience. It takes place on many levels simultaneously, so while a workshop may appear to be about communication, it is also about leadership, precision and creating a community.

Participants reported examples of ways in which the activity had impacted their broader personal learning and development. Multiple references were made to increased confidence, formulation of new ideas, different approaches to public speaking, changes in mindset and attitude over the course of the programme. On a personal level, some participants joined choirs, others theatre groups, others began writing or reignited a skill that they had not utilised for some time. The themes of increased confidence and team working have already been explored in an earlier section of the report, but collectively this suggests evidence for the impact of the programme at a broader, personal level;

How do I use these 'skills' that I am developing to help my research development? This remains still a problem for me to 'nail down' but I am beginning to see that I am becoming more imaginative as a person and that barriers that I would have built are lower than before if even erected in the first place

(I) enjoyed learning to use my voice more effectively – Thinking about posture, voice projection and the impression one gives an audience through how we stand and breathe – hoping this helps me when I have to present on my own too!

...my message is more powerful when presented in a medium that has humour and the impact can be greater...I cannot tell you how much I am changing as a person...I enjoy being more creative and the process is extremely beneficial for my mental health.

Reflective data and insights from observations would suggest that the programme also had some impact for participants in terms of feeling “re-energised” in their professional roles. Some participants reported feeling more positive in their role, taking enjoyment from the process of exploration of new skills. Participants also used language such as “life-transforming” and “life-changing” to describe the personal impact of participating in the programme:

This life changing (yes it has been for me) experience has undoubtedly changed my outlook on everything that I do. I feel re-energised and happy to face my greatest challenge of opening the door to a research world for my colleagues.

The environment I work in hasn't been terribly conducive to thinking creatively over the past few years...therefore, the opportunity to take time out from this has been important personally as well as reviewing future career plans

8.2.5.2 An emerging picture of application

Participants did however, begin to reference the ways in which exposure to the programme had influenced ways of working in their professional roles. Some were influenced at a more conceptual level, and others had been applied much more practically.

A number of participants accessed other available workshops from NHS R&D NW (such as filming and editing with i-pads) whilst undertaking the programme, which had helped them to progress their creative pieces and had reported longevity beyond the programme. Examples of this were emerging towards the end of the programme, and observations would echo this, with more overt discussions about how learning had been applied taking place;

This whole process has helped my thought processes in creating my pre and post pilot questionnaires around my innovation project. If it didn't work in the storyboard it wasn't working in what I wanted to ask people.

I am exploring opportunities for longer-term knowledge exchange/engagement fellowships and hope that the experience of this programme can be taken forward as part of this.

As part of a research programme with local communities I have also submitted an application for funding to our university's impact fund to take forward a pilot of a participatory theatre project...in order to find more engaging ways of sharing research findings.

The issue we are highlighting is the approach to communicating in the NHS...I took someone from the admin team and gave them plates to spin...four sticks in their hands...each plate was called something different, the day job, team news...they were asked to look at (a) message, keep the plates spinning and understand the message...and of course everyone got it.

It's been a fascinating journey on a personal level in the fact that I have a lot more self-confidence about how I want to try and explain not only my role but also the research that I am doing, and I am very much more aware that there are lots of different mediums I can try now.

We've also learnt so much about film making...and I want to continue...our manager wants us to get in closer contact with the research department at the hospital so that we can use our new film making skills to promote both their research and the library service

Whilst reflections demonstrated some emerging ideas of wider application and learning, observational data collected demonstrated a real focus on the task at hand in later workshops, with the conference performance being the priority and focus for participants. There were a small number of comments which reflected concern over progress for some participants. For some, this caused concern about wider applicability of learning beyond the scope of the programme;

We now have a clear idea of where we are going. I know that several others are on the same sort of path, or indeed have actually completed their task, but I feel that some are still working on the RNCM part and appear not to have a realistic use for the skills learnt.

8.2.5.3 Reciprocal learning between creatives and participants

Reflective and observational data demonstrated the reciprocal learning that was taking place for the creative artists as well as participants. There were some references to the parallels between research and creative activity that emerged across the course of the workshops;

Research is a creative endeavor, so it makes sense to include creative people as an integral part of the process...creative practice is not an add-on to research, it is research. It's amazing how many people don't get that.

I am learning so much from the researchers, and I am learning from this project the level I can work at, and the focus I can have working on different projects.

The personal impact for creative artists was also referenced across workshops and observed during dialogue within workshops observed. Particularly from reflective submissions, creative artists felt there were greater insights into the world of the NHS, as well as impacts on their own professional development. For some there had been a lasting effect;

I have really enjoyed working with my mentees and their really varied projects...figuring out what creative progress suits their research and personality as well as their audience...I have also really enjoyed the challenge of being asked to advise on two other projects...the challenge of moving between three projects really stretches me creatively.

I have made some very significant career decisions since becoming an associate with NHS R&D NW...I would really like to become involved in PPI-type stuff on a professional basis...there is a limit to how much time I want to spend driving my career forward on the commercial front, and this is the sort of work I want to do alongside...for the rest of my life.

Participants also reflected the connections between the creative process and their work, and valued the insights that the process was affording them. Reflective data highlighted the ways in which the two disciplines were connected and how this was impacting participants' work;

I am increasingly making connections between the creative and performing arts and my role within the NHS, and the need to engage and involve my client group and their families and carers. It's a joy to feel so enabled to combine my creative and clinical skills and I feel the outcome can only be something rather special

Key Learning Points from the Workshop to Performance phase of the programme

The **creative role was valued and crucial** in shaping, guiding and enhancing the development of creative pieces. Creative artists encouraged participants to try new things, and helped them to step out of their comfort zone to explore new skills.

The **emergent creative process and structure for the programme was challenging** at times for participants and creative artists. The creative team helped create reassurance and encourage confidence in this environment.

Participants experienced **increased confidence in applying their new skills**, and were comfortable in trying new and novel ideas. In equal measure, participants were **anxious as the reality** of the performance approached, and questioned the credibility of their efforts.

A **building sense of community** was displayed, with participants demonstrating effective team working, collaborative working and citizenship behaviours. Both creative artists and the participants reflected their **sense of commitment and responsibility** to the programme.

Learning had impacted more widely for participants in terms of their own **personal learning and development**. **Reciprocal learning** between the participants and the creative team was evident.

9. Arrival at the Destination?

The performance of participant pieces took place as part of the annual Let's Talk Research Conference in September 2016. All participants presented and performed either live theatrical pieces, or screened footage of the films they had been making over the course of the programme. Each performance was approximately 5 – 10 minutes, and was either the full piece that participants had created, or a snapshot of this. One group were unable to show the film they had written, produced and acted within due to a conflict in terms of ongoing research, however they contributed to the over-arching group performance which opened the conference – an introduction to the conference as a flash mob choir. Observations collated on the day of the performance reflected;

- Performances had been further worked upon and in the dress rehearsal at the venue participants performed more polished and refined performances than in the last workshop.
- The morning of the conference was the first time participants and the artists had been able to run through the performances at the venue. There were observable tensions in terms of time allocated, how the creative artists worked together in this space, as well as the communication between the creative artists and the technical team at the venue.
- Creative artists adopted roles either directing, stage managing or supporting the technical team. This was emergent on the day of the performance and some creatives had more of a prominent role in this than others.
- There was observable excitement and energy as well as some anxiety as participants arrived and undertook the run through. Time was tight for people to acclimatize and learn the process for how they would come on and off stage, as well as how props would be used and staged. This had some observed impact on participants' anxieties.
- Participants were supporting each other "backstage" during the preparation period, making use of the time before the performance started to practice and advise.
- Live performances were carried out with notable characterisation and effective staging, with use of props and different techniques. Participants showed notable energy when performances were complete, and there was high energy backstage.

All performances were recorded and can be viewed here:

<http://www.research.northwest.nhs.uk/work/academy-of-creative-minds/>

Further films are available from NHS R&D North West's YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHmArOL65zJZ1ht5Rpnx6tQ>

A small number of reflections were submitted following the September conference performance. Reflections reinforced the broader personal impact of the programme, as well as the gratitude to the creative team involved in the programme;

In all my years' experience of writing papers, presenting posters and giving talks at conferences, I have never felt that my message could be so powerful. People came to me afterward...they empathised as they had shared similar experiences and wanted to share these with me. It really was great therapy!

The new skills I have learnt, of the production process, of directing people to act in a film, of acting in a film myself, of editing the film together...these are experiences I'd often thought I'd like to try, but never thought I'd have the chance. I've now proven...I can do them all. I now want to move onto other projects and put my new skills into further practice.

The ACM has been an extraordinary, life changing experience. It has been a unique opportunity to explore, play and learn within a fun, supportive and enabling environment. The experience has been rejuvenating, exciting and wholly relevant to my career...my six months with the creatives and the team from R&D North West has given me the confidence to stride forth and make exciting things happen

10. How far did Passengers Travel?

As a way of enhancing data available regarding participant progress and personal development during the programme, a pre and post programme questionnaire was administered. Items were compiled across three themed sections to ascertain self-report data on;

- Working effectively with others
- Communication skills
- Innovative and creative thinking

Participants were asked to rate their responses to 38 items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represented completely disagree, and 5 represented completely agree. Participants completed the pre-programme questionnaire just before the residential induction and the post-programme questionnaire 6 weeks after the end of the programme. There were further white space questions in both the pre and post-programme questionnaires to gather data on expectations, experiences, application of learning, professional development and how the programme could be improved.

A total of 13 participants completed the pre-programme questionnaire and 14 completed the post-programme questionnaire. Respondents who did not answer both questionnaires were removed from the data for analysis which resulted in 11 responses in total. Seven respondents were female and four were male.

Data was considered in a number of ways; At a micro level, pre and post programme responses were compared for each individual, and this was cumulatively assessed to look at items of the questionnaire where there had been a significant change in score across the group.

Both pre and post programme responses were analysed at a macro level to investigate changes at a broader theme level. In addition, average scores were calculated for each individual item of the questionnaire to look at mean score across the group.

Table 2 shows a comparison of average scores per section of the questionnaire both before, and after the programme. This demonstrates a small but positive shift across each theme in the questionnaire at the macro-level, with the largest shift occurring in perceptions of innovative and creative thinking. As can be seen in Table X, the average pre-programme scores for each section were relatively high. The lowest average score across any individual item was 3 and the highest was 4.18, indicating that on average, participants reported mid to high levels of agreement across all items prior to the programme commencing. In comparison, the average scores for each item of the post programme questionnaire ranged from 3.45 to 4.54

Table 2: Average scores across questionnaire themes

Questionnaire Theme	No. of items	Pre-programme Average	Post-programme Average	Difference
Working effectively with others	11	3.65	4.07	0.42
Communication skills	14	3.57	4.05	0.48
Innovative and creative thinking	13	3.5	4.01	0.51

Table 3 shows those items of the questionnaire where the number of participants reflecting a positive change in score, outweighed the number of participants reflecting either negative or no change responses. Items relating to communication skills and innovative and creative thinking showed most marked change between pre and post programme responses. The table also displays the cumulative shift in score for these items across the group. The cumulative shift score is calculated by totaling all of the positive change scores, then subtracting from this, the total of all the negative change scores. For example; 8 participants had a positive change score of 1, which totals 8; 3 participants had a negative change score of 1, the cumulative change score is 8 minus 3, which gives an overall cumulative shift score of 5. The shift scores are demonstrated for each of the positive items, and in Table X further

below are items where the cumulative shift score at the group level showed a significant shift (of ≥ 6).

Table 3: Items demonstrating positive change

Questionnaire Theme	Item	No. of people positive change	No. of people negative change	No. of people no change	Cumulative shift in score
Working effectively with others	I actively encourage and value suggestions made to improve or change things	6	2	3	5
Communication skills	I can utilise a range of medium to communicate information from my research/work	6	2	3	7
	I understand how to communicate information with impact to a wider audience outside my professional circles	7	2	2	8
	I can confidently utilise stories and metaphors to bring ideas to life	6	1	4	9
	I can create a vivid picture of the future that others can engage with	7	1	3	7
	I am confident in presenting to wider audiences of those outside of my professional/peer group	6	0	5	9
Innovative and creative thinking	I have confidence to do things differently	6	1	4	8
	I apply novel solutions to overcoming challenges or barriers	7	0	4	7
	I recognise the usefulness of new information and ideas, even when they do not directly relate to the work/activity I am undertaking	7	1	3	9
	I know how to utilise creative methods to communicate information to others	8	0	3	10
	I feel comfortable utilising creative approaches in my role/work	8	1	2	9

Across the questionnaire individual participants reported a negative change in score in 30 of the 38 items. The range was 1 to 4 participants across items, with an average of 1.6 participants per item. This demonstrates that whilst the overall shift was positive, there were also a number of individual participants who experienced a negative shift in relation to a large proportion of the questionnaire items.

Table 4: Additional questionnaire items with positive cumulative shift ≥6

Questionnaire theme	Item	Cumulative shift score
Communication skills	I can confidently articulate a message, even in the face of adversity and under pressure	6
	I am confident in presenting to audiences of my peers or people that I know	7
Innovative and creative thinking	I creatively apply fresh approaches to challenges and issues	6
	I consider myself to be creative	6

10.1 Qualitative data – insights from the questionnaires

Participants were asked a number of white space questions in the pre and post-programme questionnaires. In the pre-programme questionnaire participants were asked what had inspired them to access the Academy of Creative Minds. There was a strong focus on people looking to market themselves and their research in a creative way. Some individuals were looking to use and nurture their existing creative abilities;

I'm an extremely creative person in my own right, and I'd like to find new innovative and creative ways to market my services to health researchers

Post-programme questionnaire data explored participants’ experiences in both a professional and personal capacity. When asked to summarise their experience of participating, all responses to this question were positive and highlighted feelings of personal and professional growth. The summaries reflected a strong focus on ‘stepping outside of the comfort zone’ and the positive impact of working outside traditional professional circles. Participants also reported how the programme had helped them to challenge their own boundaries and perception of self;

It showed me I had skills I didn't know about, and other skills I'd wondered about but had never had the confidence or chance to use! I've also found ways to communicate professionally that are open to me, because I didn't know they were there

Challenged some of my negative perceptions of myself. Surprised me. Very much enjoyed working with the 'creatives'...was great not to be the expert!! I love learning and it was very enjoyable to be learning outside the academic box

Data collected suggests that all participants felt their expectations of the ACM were met in full with 9 out of 11 participants explicitly reporting that the programme completely met their original objectives. 100% of participants said that they would recommend the programme to other colleagues.

When asked what they had learned from the programme, responses covered areas of both practical and personal relevance. For example, participants reported practical skills such as filming, video editing and script writing. However, there was also personal and professional learning in terms of being more open to different and novel ways of working, and having confidence to embrace new approaches. The personal impact was further explored and participants reflected a perceived increase in confidence and self-belief. Data reflected the perceived value in being able to nurture an already evident creative ability that participants had been thus far unable to use in their roles and personal lives:

I am generally more confident and more confident in being me...I am less worried about making mistakes and therefore more relaxed. I am seeking out and approaching other creative people. I feel excited, invigorated, inspired and motivated to continue on a different trajectory from before...My glass is three quarters full - not just half! My mind is constantly busy making connections, thinking of new ideas...I feel even more open to ideas and different ways of thinking, doing and being, a happy feeling of knowing I am in the right place, at the right time, doing what feels right

I have joined a choir!!!! Only been twice so far, but so far so fun...could never have imagined that

When asked about the one main learning point they had taken from the programme, participants referenced creative approaches and trying new things, but the most common theme was about increased confidence to take risks at a personal level:

Don't be scared of taking risks

Some risks are worth taking!

Just do it and be brave

The benefits to participants' professional lives were also explored. Participants gave a broad range of answers demonstrating that they have found ways to implement their learning.

A number of participants reflected the impact on working relationships, having had the opportunity to work with their colleagues on a different kind of project. A strong theme in relation to this question also reflected how the programme had impacted wider communication skills by giving insight into different approaches, as well as confidence and self-belief to try:

I met a colleague who shared some of her methods with me. She liked to use images to trigger group discussions. I used this method recently in one of my workshop to train members of the public and researchers...I got amazing feedback...it was great that ACM created that amazing space to share tips

Immediate impact of participating has been to think more carefully about how I am communicating research...at a recent workshop I intentionally didn't use PowerPoint and found this much more engaging/liberating (it also made me think more carefully about the key messages that I wanted to communicate)"

I am generally more confident and have found that I speak out more in meetings and put more ideas forwards...I think I am better able to explain what I do and more effectively get ideas across. If something doesn't make sense in a storyboard - either tangible or imagined, then I know it will not make sense in practice. Now feel excited about the prospect of preparing something for future conferences - whether poster presentation or other and I am actively seeking opportunities... The ACM has given me permission to be creative in how I gather information and share information - I feel I can now justify why I might want to take a different approach from 'the norm'

Two participants negated to answer this question as they felt it was too soon after the ACM had finished to answer this in full. When participants were asked for further ideas on how they may utilise the skills in the future some participants referenced the need to further explore this and there were a small number of comments which reflected some concern at helping others to understand more about creative approaches and how they might work in practice.

Participants were asked to comment on what they felt worked well, and what could be improved. Data suggest that the group appreciated the small team approach and the chance to learn and bond with smaller groups of people during the programme. The opportunity to work alongside creative mentors to develop their pieces and performances was also referenced as a valuable aspect of the programme;

Working as a small team with others with a common interest. I think that if I had been left to work alone, the outcome would have been far less successful. The work with the professional was challenging at times but certainly fruitful in the end

In terms of improvements, there were several references for more clarity on how the programme would flow, and a desire for more evidence and examples of where the activities explored had enhanced work of researchers or those working in health. A desire for time to be utilised in a more focused way in workshop sessions was also reported. Specifically, a number of participants expressed their personal feelings of wanting to focus on individual projects as opposed to spending time in warm-up activities or exercises. These were positively regarded, but personal preferences to “get on with the nitty gritty” influenced the impact. Linked to this there were a small number of comments which expressed a desire to have an opportunity to come back together after the conference performance to reflect and reconnect and consider next steps with the creative pieces that had been developed. Participants also showed consideration of holding self and others to account at the end of the programme, referencing a need to consider explicitly as part of the programme, how they would use their newly acquired skills going forward.

Where we were collectively headed from one workshop to the next sometimes felt hazy...I would have liked to get together after the conference - a week/two weeks afterwards perhaps to harness what went well and to work as a group on how we would take skills forwards. After working so closely for so long, and culminating in the wonderful conference, it felt like a huge loss to be no longer meeting up. It would be great to be given feedback on how we performed during the process for our continuing professional development.

In the final section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to give any additional comments. These referenced the personal journey that participants had undertaken as well as positive affirmations for the programme overall;

It has been the most amazing, transformational, valuable and wholly relevant process both personally and professionally. Amazing breadth of skills learned within a safe, supportive and enabling environment

I had too much fun not to recommend it - it might not be for everyone, but those who might benefit from it should jump at the chance

I think it will take you outside your comfort zone and make you a better person, individually and professionally

I think that as what the ACM does develops and refines it could become something highly regarded and sought after in the NHS and perhaps in wider Public Sector circles

11. Where are Passengers going next?

Interviews were undertaken with a sample of both participants and the creative team between one and three months following the end of the programme. Two of the participants interviews were carried out individually, and two group interviews were carried out, which in total incorporated 8 participants overall. Interviews were carried out with 5 of 7 creative artists. These were undertaken as part of the debriefing process, with members of the R&D NW team conducting them. Both sets of interviews focused mainly on reflections on the programme, but participant interviews specifically focused on post-programme experiences and further application of learning.

The following section explores the themes generated from the interviews. For both participants and creative artists, this builds on data presented in other sections of the report, enhancing the views already identified from other data sources.

11.1 Participant Interviews

11.1.1 Application of learning

Participants reported the ways in which attendance at the Academy of Creative Minds had impacted their ways of working in their professional roles. Participants explored the ways they had applied their learning since the programme completed and there were examples of both direct and indirect application of learning. Some of the application was at a much earlier stage of exploration than others, but reflected participants' willingness to further utilise their learning. For example, participants had applied learning to training delivery, engagement with colleagues, improved techniques for public speaking and developing further films to promote particular research studies. The programme had invited the participants to question the usual ways they would engage around their work, and new ideas had started to form as to how their skills could be used more widely:

I approached (researcher) and she was very enthusiastic about the project and we went through the research and what it entailed and all of the different stages...and then she put it altogether and it was an evidence base to keep her service going, and I helped her to do a script to demonstrate the evidence base

I am doing two little research projects...and we need to be engaging and convincing...I was thinking of using stop motion, some people might do monologues

It's made me think about how I use this stuff in teaching...you remember far more by using other parts of your brain, rather than the writing and reasoning bit

In some cases, participants reported how they had made their work more visible through utilisation of creative techniques, for example, using pictures and visuals to engage colleagues in difficult or "dry" subjects. In addition participants were utilising their experience as a platform for championing future creative endeavours and highlighting the value of the programme:

One thing I have done since the conference is set aside some money in the budget for more creative engagement...this is an opportunity to do a little trial or something...I see it as my responsibility because I have been on the course, and it's whether I can support others to work in this way to use these approaches

We have written a short blog about our experiences which we are planning on publishing on the school for public health research...it's just again about sharing examples to other researchers about how we are going about our research

There were a number of comments about the usefulness of the creative arts in breaking down barriers, and creating a safe space. Some participants talked about utilising their skills and creative pieces to engage the public in research, either in generating questions for research or reporting ideas back to research participants:

I am on the patient information committee here so there might be some scope to see how film making or story telling could be part of that...I can see a lot of scope for this being used to explain different professional roles in the hospital, or research or whatever

I have two charities that have helped me and I would like to show it to them because they helped me with the study...we can arrange a time with potential participants there, to say thank you and this is what I have managed to do, and that the information you gave me isn't going to waste.

Participants appeared to show some apprehension in their application of performance skills in its' purist sense, but referenced the ways in which this had shifted their mindset or perspectives, enabling them to consider different ways of presenting or approaching work within their roles. Specifically participants referenced the ways they (and their colleagues in team situations) are thinking more broadly about communicating messages:

...it's made me step back and think what do I want to communicate, what do I want to get across rather than rattling off a set of PowerPoint's...so I didn't go in singing or dancing or anything like that, but it did help me think about who I am communicating a message to and the best way of doing it

I have a few things coming up and I am not going to do anything creatively radical...I am writing myself a script for what I am going to say, and I would have done that anyway but I think the way I am doing it has improved because of the course.

11.1.2 Readiness in the system

Linked to the above theme, nearly all participants referenced the challenges of using the skills learned in their traditional working environments. Although committed to utilising their learning, and having ideas of how creative arts could be used more widely, there were a number of comments which suggested a difficulty in embedding these new techniques and skills when others may not understand or welcome them. There was some reference to academic environments being inaccessible and sometimes “a bit stuffy” and that creative approaches create a more accessible way in for those outside of academia. Participants reflected on the potential resistance in academic environments, and the perceived political issues around making research more accessible:

I am not saying anything personal but it is a general political point, senior academics have an interest in the idea that a message is too complex for a creative 5 minute presentation to challenge...it's a very difficult environment for us to try and work within.

There's two issues; one about how we convey academic messages, more practical about what we want to get out of this and how we can use this film to stimulate conversations...but the other is about how we fit into the academic environment where you know there is a commitment to public engagement but when you try to activate that you come up against other issues you may not have anticipated.

In some cases the creative pieces and activity was seen as “an entry point” to conversations, with the work undertaken as part of the Academy of Creative Minds, an important part of that evidence base and discussion. There was a feeling of responsibility from some participants to begin to share their learning as part of this evidence base. Some of this can be seen in the quotes above.

Although there were challenges, participants reported a motivation to do things differently after seeing the ways in which creative activity could enhance communication and message delivery. Participants could see the possibilities for broader application outside of their immediate areas of work, to further benefit the organisations they were working within. Participants described their own desire to challenge the system and the status quo, and comments suggest that the programme influenced their ability to do this more confidently:

...I feel I've got the confidence to go out there and achieve this, but as for something like performing...I am not going to join the am-dram society...nothing like that. But it has shown me...I never knew I could write like that and they've now asked me to write a Trust newsletter...if they'd said write a newsletter before I would have done it in the Trust template and now I don't want to use that...I am playing with some ideas but I am not going to stick to conventional terms.

11.1.3 Time

A recurring theme in the interview data was the time needed both to attend the programme, and to further embed skills learned. Although organisations had reportedly supported time out for participants, some had undertaken elements of the programme in their own time. Participants' comments suggest that a significant amount of their own personal time was needed to progress the work they were undertaking, particularly when working in teams. There was an acknowledgment that the amount of time needed was unknown going into the programme, and the discretionary effort required was crucial to ensure completion of creative pieces. Comments from participants would also indicate that time continued to be an issue in the further utilisation and dissemination of their creative pieces. This appears to have been a compounding factor, alongside readiness of the system, in participants' ability to translate and embed their creative pieces, and learning when returning to the "day-job":

If you're coming in halfhearted, you're wasting your time. You've got to be very open minded...logistically it was very crammed at the end, the tech rehearsal and everything, but you didn't get chance to enjoy it because it was just crammed

(Manager) would like to see us embedded in the research department and produce films for the library, so I think it will continue if we have time...time is always the crucial thing isn't it...when we filmed the first film it was quite a bit of time.

11.1.4 Personal impact

As with other data sets the benefits to participants at a personal level were consistently referenced. Participants reported the strong impact on a personal level, and their own individual journeys of self-belief and confidence. People reported feeling "brave" and wanted to "celebrate being different" as they considered their newly acquired skills and learning. Data suggests that participants had new perspectives and, and this had increased confidence in both carrying out their roles, and in doing things differently. Participants reported the positive impact in terms of personal feelings about their career and a sense of renewed energy and increased resilience and tenacity around challenges in their career were evident in the data. They consistently referenced being more open to creative approaches and being less conventional. As well as this, some participants noted that the creative activity had helped them to deal with some difficult emotions at challenging times both within their career and their personal lives:

In one way it has helped me to feel a bit more enthusiastic about my job, at times I just feel blocked, things I try and implement just get blocked. I think it's just about being persistent and encouraging people to give it a go...

I've been exploring what I want to do longer term and exploring the Wellcome Trust work around public engagement...there is a gap in the evidence for this sort of work so if you could find a way of building the evidence using co-creative approaches as well...is there a way of combining the two and having an academic career that focuses on public engagement

it certainly helped me release my creative side and it's made me want to embrace my more creative side, and do more writing and stuff...I've just found it such an amazing experience...I feel like it has actually renewed my confidence in my writing

There were multiple references to participants seeing a different side to themselves or in team situations, seeing colleagues in a new light. It had given participants a “new identity” in some cases, and confidence to explore their careers and engage with colleagues in a different way. In a team sense, this had a clear impact on strengthening relationships with colleagues and team members. There was recognition that research roles can be isolating at times and that people tend to work individually but taking part in the programme as members of the same team, had helped strengthen relationships and had given people a new reference point for their colleagues. Some participants referenced the benefits of working collaboratively across the group, without any sense of hierarchy which can sometimes be felt in academic environments. Outside of the programme, the impact had been noted in terms of creating new networks, and being able to approach other colleagues more confidently to share their learning:

I work fairly independently and I am on my own quite a lot, so having this process of working with people that I know but haven't worked with before, it's actually been really helpful and on a personal level, really nice to have that team work...because you don't often get that opportunity.

One of the best things has been getting to know a different side to my colleagues. So now I have a really different reference point for them...I have learned that they can go out of their comfort zone, so with that I have learned that I can ask for particular projects, for them to get on board.

...it's given me that confidence and the creative bit to actually create this person who is actually a natural bridge that people will come to naturally...but it's kind of like giving myself a new identity, a new uniform to wear.

I feel I can go to the research unit now and say, this is what we have done, this is how we can help you.

11.1.5 Value of creative contribution

Several comments referred to the value in working with the creative artists. Participants recognised the skills they brought to the programme, and the ways in which the creative artists increased the impact of their own ideas and work. Participants valued the knowledge and tools and techniques shared with them and the opportunity to work alongside professional writers, musicians and performers:

I am someone that does a lot of writing/creative writing in my own time so it was really valuable to work with a professional to see how you actually do that...working with (creative) brought another perspective as well, in terms of how you put yourself across on stage, so this was a really valuable opportunity to have that experience

I've been writing since I was a teenager...but I had never directed before and didn't know if I could do it, but (creative) really helped me and showed me various techniques to get it done...

In some cases, participants acknowledged that the creative artists' advice and guidance helped to move their pieces from a mindset of giving information, to one of entertainment. The creative artists had helped people consider a less literal interpretation of their work, and encouraged a more conceptual approach, which had greater impact for the audience. Examples referenced included advice on ways of staging, support to create more in-depth characters, adding musical phrasing to emphasise feeling and advice on writing for effect.

11.2 Creative Interviews

11.2.1 Relationships, roles and responsibilities

There were generally positive views in how the creative team had worked together within the Academy of Creative Minds. All creative artists felt that the outcome had been positive, particularly in light of the fact that they had never worked together before as a whole group. There was some reference to the dynamics between certain members of the group across the time, which related less to personal issues and more to methodologies or general differences in artistic approach:

We are all used to shifting ourselves to make the dynamic work so it was always harmonious...if there was any friction, it was friction of methodologies, not friction of personalities

So the different priorities we had at times...might have been more straightforward if we had more understanding of each other...we could have found a way to work things through. There are different ways to know the same thing.

One person's art or creativity or whatever you call it doesn't always work well with another's and I don't think that's anybody's fault...they're not always complementary and that's not a criticism, that's just a fact.

Linked to this the creatives reported their understanding of the pilot nature of the programme, and the exploratory ways in which elements were carried out. However there was recognition of the challenges of not having set outcomes or objectives, and role clarity from the beginning. For some this appeared to have a detrimental effect in terms of relationship building across the team at times. Generally the creatives felt that it was important to clarify certain roles and responsibilities going forwards:

I am used to working with other creatives, what was different here was that we were all chucked in together and navigating roles and responsibilities was a challenge for the group and me personally...because it wasn't structured I think we got into some struggles which got in the way of best practice.

Specific roles need allocating...needing to figure out stage management, director, music director rather than shoe-horning it in as we went...(the) creatives just having more specific roles within it.

Some creative artists discussed the collaborative and team working that took place, and explored their own perceptions of this and how it felt to be part of a team of creative artists supporting the programme. There were multiple references to the importance of building trust across the group of artists, and a sense of vulnerability as individuals get to know each other and establish their own credibility amongst the group. Specifically references were made to needing additional time together as a group to establish some of those working relationships more soundly. Some artists explained how they had previously experienced collaborative working such as this, whereas others found this challenging as they were more used to working alone. References to this were linked to discussion of roles and responsibilities and the challenges in navigating this when there was a common purpose, but no common language:

We probably could have done with more time just being a group of creatives together...I am very used to working with collaboratives so I enjoyed it...I don't think some of the other creatives are used to working as collaboratively maybe.

I am used to having a responsibility for making things happen within what I do because that's where the book stops...and for me I found it quite hard to pull back on that...for me to work in a team like that where I don't have the role or responsibility like that has been absolutely illuminating...it's such a habit to have full responsibility that I had to let go and almost surrender and that was a challenge.

For some creatives there was a feeling that skills could have been put to better use, and that structure or further clarity could have enabled this more readily. For example, using their specialised skills in a more focused way across the group, or exploring more fully how certain creative arts could have been better applied. There was some impact on satisfaction in relation to this on a small number of occasions.

...that was unsatisfying to me sometimes going home because I felt like I hadn't earned my money and because I was so passionate about what I do, I went home feeling empty...

All of the creatives mentioned the positive relationship with the NHS R&D NW team, especially in terms of trust and space to allow the programme and the process to evolve. Creatives mentioned the importance of the trust given, and how this had been beneficial to the development of the programme.

You've taken a huge project and been really relaxed about it and you've had huge trust in us...working creatively, it really does help.

...were it not for how you operated and lead, we could not have made it...the risks taken by you guys, off the hook is only the beginning of the story. We felt we could come to you, to know there was that safe space was very important.

11.2.2 The Place of Music

Several of the creative artists referenced the challenges in bringing the musical element to the fore during the programme. There was a perception that asking participants to write or speak was more comfortable than asking them to sing or make music;

our participants took to word based activities more like ducks to water...It's not that doing it is easier but I think they got hold of that...so with music this is where the boundaries come up...the singing side of things...you've got to teach people how to sing before they can sing

Particularly, there was recognition that music could be “alienating” dependent on perceptions of participants in terms of what “music” and “singing” really entailed. There was some reference to the need to support participants to understand how they could make music to help embed this further. For example, encouraging participants to recognise that using any object to “make a tune” can be music. This sense of reframing, and ideas for better embedding and application of music were well evidenced;

I thought we were going to go down the percussion, rhythm making route, it's something everyone can do...I would love every one of them to bring a sound element of some sort...something they can bang...everybody has access to things that make a tune.

Musical creatives reported that they would do things differently with the benefit of hindsight and when introducing the musical element at the residential session. Creatives were passionate about the fact that music should be utilised in an applied way, to add value rather than utilising music or singing for the sake of it. Some references were made to the ways in which music could emphasise and enhance storytelling and narrative, having a broader impact on communication overall.

11.2.3 Professional insights and development

There were clear references across the interviews, of the insights the Academy of Creative Minds had offered to the creative team, and the links they could see between their own creative work and that of researchers and NHS colleagues. The artists referenced the ways in which taking part had allowed them to gain further insight into the world of the NHS and researchers and this had challenged pre-conceptions;

Any pre-conceived ideas that researchers wouldn't do creativity, is just kind of blown out of the water...(the) classic thing of a science researcher is a boffin-type image, its impressive from the outside...and we know now, we're just like you and you're just like us.

But (it) was fantastically interesting because of the analytical minds of the people we were working with, which in many ways is similar to the way musicians work...it probably took me too long to get to realise that with them. If I'd spotted that much quicker I would have found that we're not these two different animals and that we had more in common.

Comments reflected the value of these insights and how this had impacted on creative artists' professional development, as well as at an individual level more personally in terms of confidence and validation:

it has been fantastic...it has been quite an emotional thing for me, my personal development, my sense of self-worth, it's moved me forward in a way I am excited about...this is real...this is the NHS, you don't realise how much that is part of your conscience and I feel very proud and privileged to have taken part in this

I have enjoyed the opportunity and the process of having to learn about how the NHS works, how this NHS machines works, and what's involved...the more I have been involved in that, the more I can see that to work within this kind of way in the NHS framework is what I want to do

Linked to the above, the creative artists explored the ways in which taking part had impacted upon their professional development more widely either through enhancing their professional networks, being offered additional commissions or stimulating further thoughts about career development or direction. They reported feeling a sense of purpose in working on something collaboratively over a long time period:

It's had a huge impact on how I work...it has made me really sure that I want to do longer, more involved projects. I really thrived in my mentor role because I think I am really good at it and have wanted to do it more and have not quite figured out how, and this has given me the chance to stretch out in that mentor role

I wouldn't have come into contact with (creative) and (creative) or even (creative), but that's brilliant to have them in my address book to be able to call on, it's fantastic

Aligned to this, creative artists explained that taking part in the Academy of Creative Minds had in some cases led to further commissions due to connections with other artists or people within the group. Examples include being invited to work with a coaching client; being invited to work on a play and producing projects with the Manchester Camerata.

12. Continuing the Journey: Conclusions

The aims of the programme were to challenge, empower and inspire participants and increase confidence in communication skills. The data collected across all data sets would indicate that these over-arching objectives have been achieved, and that participants have benefitted from exposure to the programme:

- Participants found the creative exposure exhilarating, fun, rejuvenating and a great personal journey at the individual level. Exposure to the programme inspired and encouraged participants to experiment with new ways of working, and to utilise new approaches in their professional and personal lives. Confidence increased as participants were invited out of their comfort zone and exposed to new creative processes, and this appeared in a number of cases, to positively impact participants' self-perception and general well being. Some participants clearly identified that the programme had helped to rejuvenate and reinvigorate their career, and a wish to challenge convention.
- This was an iterative and emergent process, which allowed both creatives and participants to explore the programme in ways that were meaningful for them, within a loose structure. At times this was useful; participants could work flexibly across mentors and with other group members, as well as contributing to a group performance, bringing everyone closer to the musical element of the programme. At times however, this was less useful; roles and responsibilities were unclear, aims and objectives were not defined and the whole process was not fully visible to participants. Some of this was challenging for both participants and creative artists alike and moving forwards there was a desire for more structure around the programme elements, as well as more clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- The value of creative mentorship and the benefits of having this support were clearly noted by participants. The creative mentor role helped to build confidence through creating a safe space to explore new tools and techniques. Creatives shaped and co-created ideas and creative pieces developed by participants and offered discretionary support outside of the programme to help participants' progress. Participants referenced the support as crucial for the development of their pieces.
- Linked to the above, an emergent theme across data sets was the time taken to attend, as well as the time needed to ensure performances were ready for the conference. Participants and the creative team worked beyond the remit of the programme and in their own time to ensure performances were completed. This may be an important consideration for the sustainability of the programme going forwards.

- Continued application of learning is slowly emerging. Whilst none of the participants referenced explicitly performing or showing their pieces elsewhere, they reported instances where their learning has been applied in a practical sense as well as further ideas for broader application. The main impact of undertaking the programme appears to be in participants' ability to question their choices of communication styles and methods when presenting their work, as well as increased confidence to attempt novel approaches and in challenging the status quo. Some participants reflected that it may be too early to yet assess the full impact and applicability of learning, and this should be considered. It may be useful to contact participants again further down the line to ascertain further insight into the longer-term impact of the programme.
- Questionnaire data reflects that participants' self-report measures increased across all categories of the questionnaire (working with others, communication skills and innovative and creative thinking). This adds further evidence to the building picture of increased confidence, and application of learning as described by other data sets.
- The programme appears to have positively impacted the building of networks and a continuing sense of community amongst the participants and creative artists. Data suggests that the skills learned are also helping participants to further build their networks outside of the programme, and encourage other colleagues to consider the value of creative approaches. Data suggests that there is commitment and passion for continual application of learning, and for continuing to utilise the techniques and skills learned. However, a number of the data sources referenced the challenges of engaging others, and the receptivity of professional colleagues and institutions to the utilisation of creative approaches. Multiple references were made to the hierarchical nature of academic environments and the political factors affecting "readiness" for these approaches. Participants have started to challenge convention, and see the creative activity as a catalyst for broadening the discussion and encouraging others to see the value it can have.

Appendix 1: Residential Taster Session Summaries

Alex Douglas: Music Ensemble Workshop

One of Alexander's key interests is in musical leadership and the role that this plays in empowering music-makers at every level to become 'more' – not only as musicians and singers, but as people. At the heart of leadership is understanding and communication. At the Academy, members of Alexander's workshop groups will take a steep journey to actually becoming a 'musical ensemble' (although no-one will be forced to 'sing' or 'play' - there are many ways to make music!). After some 'breakdown activity' in which the group members start to learn about each other whilst continuing to develop as an ensemble. With some bespoke coaching and depending on group numbers, participants will be given the opportunity to take it in turns to 'direct' the group using a combination of what they have observed and learned as well as the communications skills that they already possess.

The dynamic interplay between being an ensemble member and ensemble leader will offer a rich tapestry of insights into questions which have meaning and resonance far beyond music itself; they will apply to the challenges of disseminating ideas as healthcare researchers and also to wider questions of leadership itself.

Jana Kennedy: Comedy and Shared Experience Workshop

Jana is a skilled comedian, performer, MC & writer based in Manchester. She uses truth, clown, comedy and the beauty of human happenings in her work. Jana has facilitated arts and performance workshops since 2005, using bespoke, solution based approaches to making art and performance in Arts Centres, Museums, Libraries, Schools and Community groups.

As a socially engaged artist she enjoys working with others encouraging creativity to be a shared experience. She places particular importance on the making or developing process, enabling the final results to be owned by the participants whom the work will mean most to. Working with participants to gain skills in confidence, voice, presentation and movement Jana focuses on their specific need to provide create solutions.

Some of the organisations Jana has worked with include: The Victoria and Albert Museum, Department for Education, Whitworth Art gallery and Glastonbury Festival.

Participants will:

- Build confidence
- Be comfortable on stage or presenting
- Explore movement – body language
- Experiment with voice
- Understand more about comedy

Kate Marlow: Creative Imagination

“Imagination is more important than knowledge” Albert Einstein

“You can’t do it unless you can imagine it” George Lucas

In this workshop you will be shown how to use Creative Imagination to create logical storylines, memorable and beautiful work that commands effortless attention.

Creative Imagination is a skill that can be taught. Once acquired the skill of Creative Imagination can be practiced and used in any setting to achieve a purpose, anytime, anywhere. Using a unique skillset and toolbox to teach participants how to access their Creative Imagination at will, through a series of exercises.

By the end of the workshop participants will have acquired skills to take away to use in their own setting to communicate and deliver their research message.

Actors, directors and writers all create with their imagination, using it is the bedrock of the craft to tell story. It is those who have the most talent of imagination that create the most memorable work.

I teach this skill using the same exercises to actors, singers, sports professionals, professionals from all walks of life, and children from age 5 upwards. Because imagination is an inherently human faculty, it can lead us to great joy and wonder or to fear and tragedy.

Richard Taylor and Amina Cunningham: Music Workshop

Exactly *how* music can effectively be used to help illustrate the presentation of research will, of course, depend on the nature of the research. But there’s no question music is a fantastic way to animate any presentation.

‘Music’ is rhythm, pitch, texture, timbre. All forces moving together, in unison maybe, in the same direction. Strength in numbers. Or the opposite: a fracturing, splitting of cells from one central point, in all directions, creating a complex network of interlocking patterns. Perhaps we create a tightly constructed rhythmic framework, and then remove one key element to highlight the sonic-space where that missing piece once belonged. Or we impose a five-beat rhythm on a solid foursquare march, and listen as the whole thing slowly disintegrates! How about a Manchester Camerata cello snaking through a thicket of claps and finger clicks?

Whatever the narrative being told, music has endless ability to be the perfect metaphor to get the message across. And importantly, as the session will prove, you don’t have to be experienced musicians to perform. Music and rhythm of apparent complexity can be created in very easy steps, by anyone, with simple individual contributions amounting to an impressive whole.

Rob Young: Screenwriting Workshop

Writers and Researchers have much in common. They tend to be quiet, hardworking people whose work takes a long time to brew. Then, after months of dogged study, they present their papers with coyness, discretion and hope. But in today's fame-obsessed society, there are millions of other voices, harsher and brasher, all clamouring for our attention, in every media imaginable. So, how can one demure Researcher possibly hope to be heard above this infernal cacophony?

Rob Young is a veteran screenwriter, who pitches his ideas to the UK's biggest film and TV companies. He does this not by transforming himself into a Cheesy Salesman or Game Show Host, but by presenting his work with clarity. It is a skill you can learn. In this warm, witty and accessible workshop, Rob will share the 'tricks of his trade', gleaned from 20 years experience.

Together, we will learn to 'write a movie' then pitch it to our peers, in plain, simple English - because as the old saying goes, "The more elaborate our means of communication, the less we communicate".

Jane Martindale and Angela Todd: Academic session

The aim of the academic workshop is to reflect on how the arts and creative skills that people have discussed and developed in the workshop can be used in research. The facilitators will briefly summarise their own experiences of using the arts within research and to communicate and disseminate research. Following this the participants will consider how working creatively with the arts can fit in the research journey? Working in groups, participants will be asked to think about their own research or areas of research interest and consider two questions:

1. How would you use these creative arts skills in research from application to dissemination?
2. What added value do the arts bring to research? How do you communicate this to funders and different research audiences?

Appendix 2: Summary of Participant Creative Pieces

Lancaster Team

NHS R&D NW Team/Whole Group Performance

Cheshire Team

Saskia Grassie

Grace Johnson

Tom Bell

Judith Ormrod

Jane Martindale