



UCL

Exploring Lived Experience With Creative Arts

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Arts as Trauma-Sensitive Research



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- **Trauma** = lasting adverse impacts on mental, physical and emotional health (*Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022*).
- Research can **unintentionally re-traumatise** vulnerable individuals (*Hugman et al., 2011; Davidson et al., 2023*).
- **Ethical duty**: minimise harm, promote participant wellbeing (*Deps et al., 2022*).

Traditional Interviews vs. Theatre-Based Research

Feature	Traditional Interviews	Theatre-Based Research
Mode of Expression	Verbal, structured Q&A	Physical, verbal, emotional, creative
Participant Role	Respondent	Co-creator, storyteller, performer
Language and Literacy Barriers	High	Low (non-verbal methods possible)
Trauma Sensitivity	Risk of retraumatisation through direct questioning	Safer distance through fiction, metaphor, and role-play
Power Dynamics	Researcher controls pace and agenda	Shared control; participant-driven narrative
Engagement Style	One-to-one, hierarchical	Group-based, collaborative, relational
Data Collected	Verbal answers (transcripts)	Embodied stories, images, performances, emotions
Emotional Impact	Can be stressful, retraumatising	Can be empowering, cathartic, community-building
Suitability for RAS Populations	Limited by language, trust issues	Inclusive of multiple languages, cultures, modes of communication

(Fraser & Sayah, 2011; Wall et al., 2020; Grandi, 2021)

Arts as Inclusive Co-Creation

CREATIVE ART TYPES



VISUAL ARTS

Painting
Sculpture
Photography



PERFORMING ARTS

Dance
Theater
Music



LITERARY ARTS

Poetry
Fiction
Non-Fiction



DIGITAL ARTS

Graphic Design
Animation
Digital Photography



APPLIED ARTS

Fashion Design
Interior Design
Industrial Design



CRAFTS

Ceramics
Textiles
Woodworking

BENEFITS:

- **Empowerment & Agency**

Inviting participants to participate in shift of power, express themselves through their own identity & ownership, shape research questions & methods - yields deeper, more relevant insights (*Brett et al., 2014*).

- **Innovation & Creativity**

Joint art-making fosters out-of-the-box thinking, uncovering meanings & solutions that conventional qualitative methods may overlook (*Camic & Chatterjee, 2013*).

- **Historical Precedent**

Historical communication method, story telling, religious painting etc. (*Uduak & Akpan, 2020*)

- **Trust-Building & Relationship Capital**

Sharing creative processes breaks down hierarchies, enhancing rapport & honest exchange between researchers & community members (*Wilson & Jennings, 2015*).

- **Rigorous, Contextualised Data**

Arts-based outputs capture rich psychosocial dimensions & cultural nuances, strengthening validity and transferability (*Wang & Burris, 1997*).

- **Knowledge Translation & Impact**

Co-produced exhibitions, performances or digital stories make findings accessible & compelling to policymakers, practitioners & public (*Jensen & Bonde, 2018*).



PSP REFUGEE Project - Trauma-Based Theatre

- **Builds on ARC-supported NEON & CHAMPIONS projects' evidence** to address health needs of refugee/asylum-seeking (RAS) children under 5 as these children have a much higher risk of poor health (*Baauw et al., 2019; Thacher, et al., 2016*)
- **Addresses limited research** in co-developing culturally-appropriate nutritional & health intervention to support RAS families with limited resources who have now settled in the UK (*Nur et al., 2021*).
- Trauma-sensitive theatre **extends existing arts-based research traditions** (*Fraser & Sayah, 2011; Wall et al., 2020*).



NIHR

Applied Research
Collaboration
North Thames



HAPPY BABY
COMMUNITY

"The cooperation between mums were great, there were a nice bond between the mums, all participated equally, no shame, they had the right to speak and express their mind and heart freely"

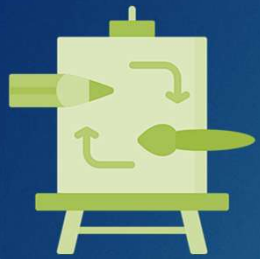


"[The theatre artist] asked [mums] to close [their] eyes and think about where they want to be. This feels good, [mums] forget about bad memories"



"Hearing how other cultures tell stories reminded me that no matter how different cultures humanity have a common side of life – how to teach children at home"





CHAMPIONS – Arts Mix

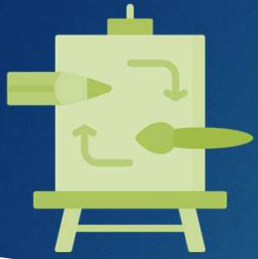


CHAMPIONS (Children in Homeless Accommodations Managing Poverty Invisibility Or Non-inclusive Strategies) - national project looking at the impact of living in **poverty on UK children under 5 who are living in temporary accommodation (TA)** due to experiencing homelessness.

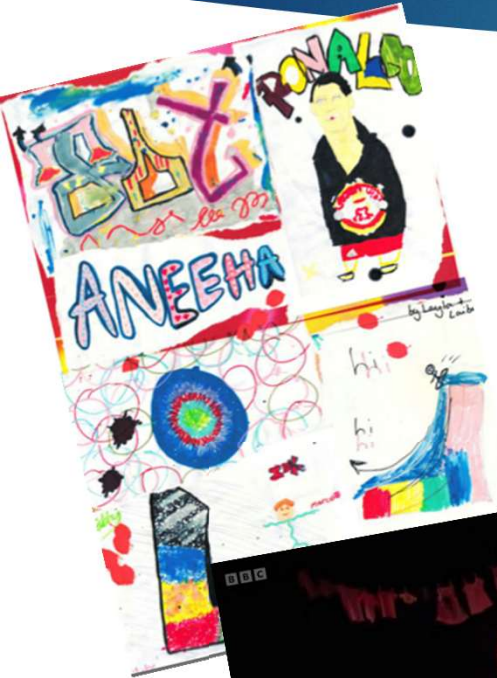
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Milestones theatre production	SoundVoice sound installations	Newham workshop children zine	De Montfort University wall mural	British Science Festival ceramics

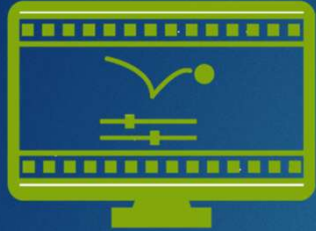


Economic
and Social
Research Council



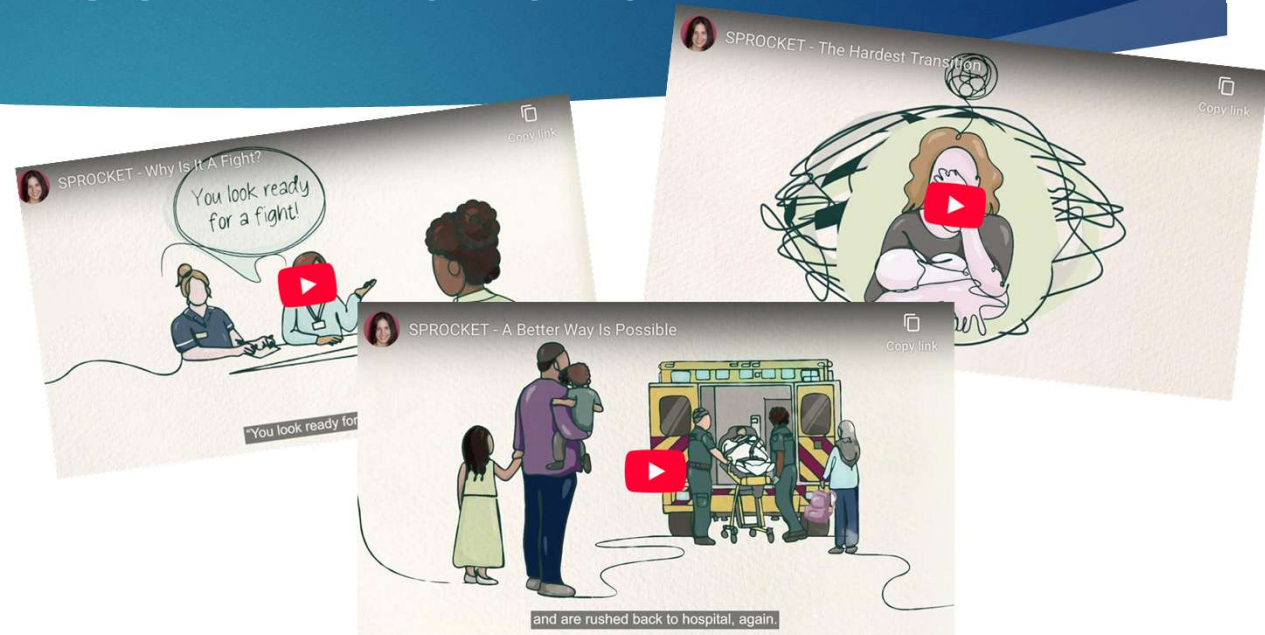
CHAMPIONS – Arts Mix

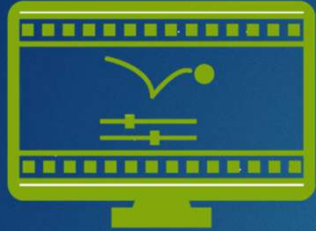




SPROCKET Project – Lived Experience Animations

- **SPROCKET** (Systems and Process Redesign and Optimisation at Childhood Key Events and Transitions) - new project aiming to change the delivery of services **for children and young people with complex health needs**.
- Worked with parents of children and young people with complex health needs to **design the content of three animations exploring different aspects of their lived experience**.





SPROCKET Project – Lived Experience Animations

DISCLAIMER

This film is based on the real experiences of people looking after children with complex needs in the UK today.

Some details have been changed in order to preserve anonymity.



Thank You

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