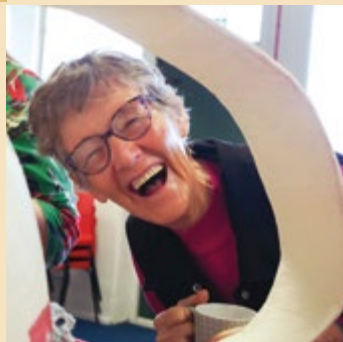


Home from Home project

Impact Report 2026



www.skipko.org.uk



Introduction – Skippko and the Home from Home programme

“Evaluation is a systematic process used to judge the merit, worth, or significance of projects, policies, or activities by collecting evidence. It is designed to determine what worked, what did not, and why, aiming to improve future practice and inform decision-making” (UK Government: Guide to evaluation in health and wellbeing)

For reasons that are not entirely clear, I have frequently approached the question of ‘evaluation’ with suspicion or wariness, especially when referencing creativity.

I get the need to do things better but, worth? How does one judge ‘merit’ and worth? Or, more importantly, why?

When we interviewed Rachel Vernelle more than three years ago, it became clear that here was somebody who did things differently. Saw things differently.

Rachel’s approach was epitomised by ‘what does this really mean and will it have an influence in the future?’

In other words, what are we learning and how can we apply it?

‘**Home from Home**’ was a landmark programme for Skippko; an unsubsidised, small visual arts organisation. With funding released by National Lottery Community Fund, we were able to plan three years’ work with the resources to match our participants’ growing ambition and confidence as we reached into communities new to Skippko. Yes, £371,000 is a substantial amount but we discovered it wasn’t the sum that was important, it was the certainty provided by the grant that was important.

Rachel Vernelle has created this Impact Report.

As with all of Rachel’s work across the three years, it has not been edited or amended by Skippko. In a sense, it sits alongside the collection of Rachel’s detailed reporting which is also freely available.

The programme has been a success as measured and evidenced across the last three years. We have reached new communities, created new hubs and brought many hundreds into new worlds of creativity, social interaction and individual development.

The difficulty we now face is, how do we maintain the scope, scale and intensity of the last three years?

How do we continue to provide the creative opportunity so many of our participants freely admit to have made demonstrable impact on their personal mental health and wellbeing?

We’ll let you know what we did in three years’ time.

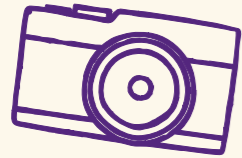
Arthur Stafford
Director, Skippko Arts Team



Home from Home in Numbers



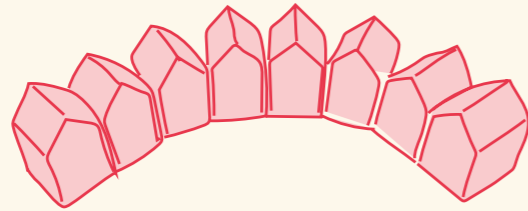
The programme, funded by National Lottery Community Fund, spanned **Spring 2023 to Spring 2026** and in that time, we:



Created and implemented **33** projects together with **6** publications



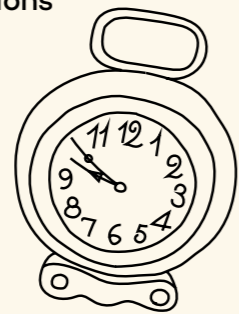
Worked with participants from all **5** of the City's key priority areas to tackle health inequalities



Worked with **1,472** participants drawn from **23** of the City's **29** postcode districts, all of which lay in the **1%** most deprived communities in those postcodes



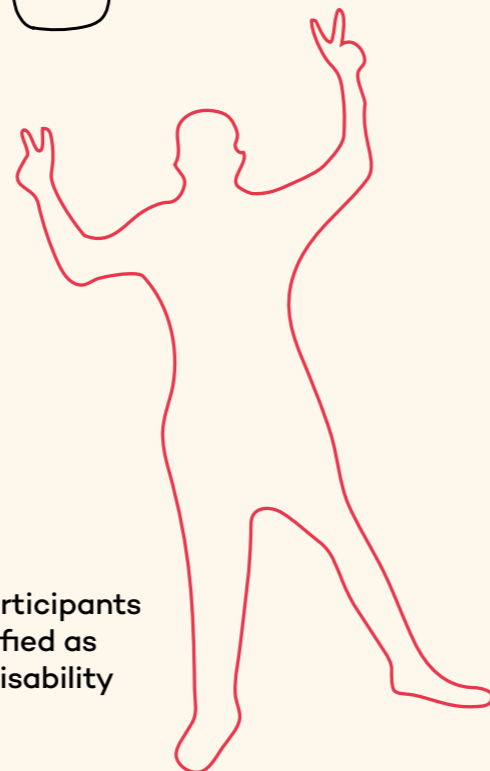
Presented **1,608** workshop sessions



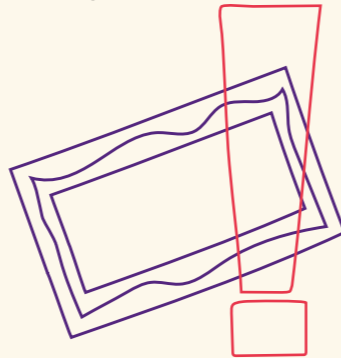
25% of participants self-identified as having a disability



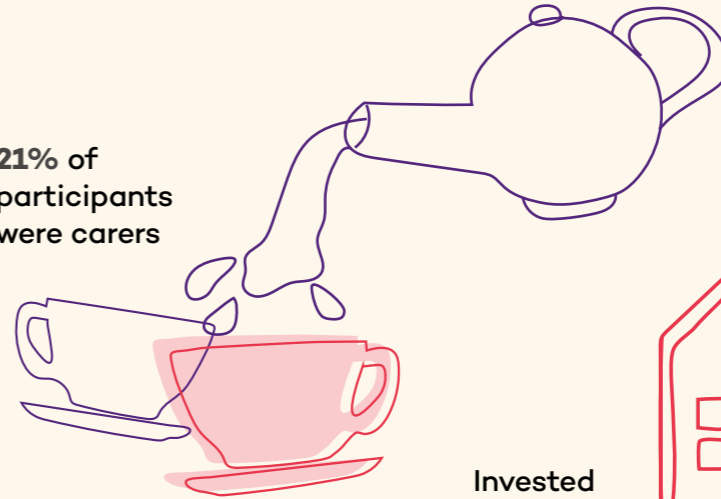
55% of our participants were over **65**



Provided **342** exhibition sessions attracting an audience in excess of **68,000**



21% of participants were carers



Matched the **£371,000** from National Lottery Community Fund with **£470,000** of our funding, totalling **£841,000** income over three years

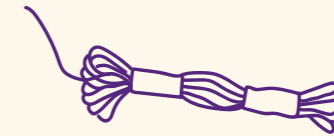


Provided work for **15** local artist facilitators, coordinator and learning partner totalling **£250,000**

"a lovely chance to be alive and playful in wonderful nature and company"



Invested **£100,000** to Leeds City Council by way of rent, rates and service charge



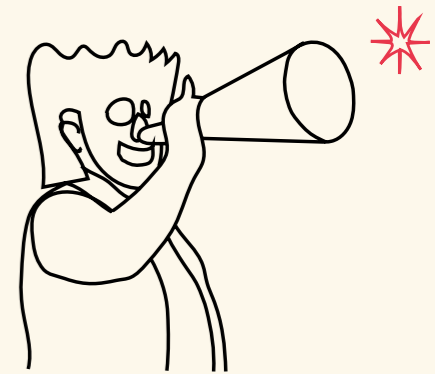
Invested in excess of **£125,000** by way of local purchase of goods and services



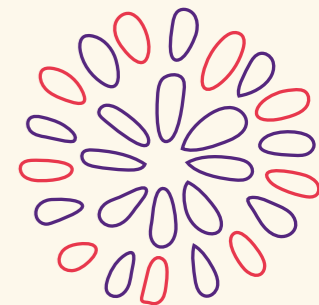
Invested in excess of **£50,000** to the local transport economy

HAPPY

"feels like we're a big cuddly family"

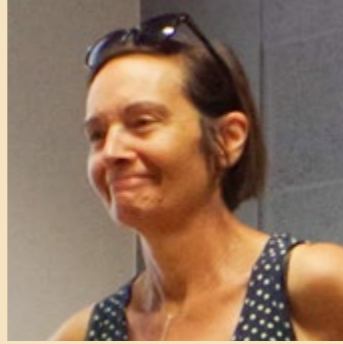


Delivered the entire programme with an office team of **3** part time workers at a cost of **17%** of total income



"... you're at home and you're around people that love you, respect you, honour you.... (it) can't get better than that, can it? I don't think I've ever been anywhere that has given me that....Skippko is fulfilling me in parts that I don't think I've ever been fulfilled"

Learning Partner – observations and evaluation



The role of the Learning Partner

In late 2023, Rachel Vernelle began working with Skippko on **Home from Home**. From the outset, there was a question about what her role – and title – should be: Evaluator? Critical Friend? Cultural Sheepdog?! In the end, “Learning Partner” felt like the best fit.

Learning - Skippko is a learning organisation, grounded in values-led exploration and an artistic willingness to step into new – and sometimes uncomfortable – spaces in order to deliver its work.

Partner - This role was not about capturing learning at the end of the programme. Instead, Rachel worked alongside Skippko throughout, offering support, providing challenge where needed, and helping the organisation adapt and evolve as **Home from Home** progressed.

Over the course of the programme, Rachel:

- Attended a wide range of Skippko groups and activities
- Took part in both at-home and in-person sessions
- Held regular conversations with participants, artists, Board members, partner organisations, and staff
- Supported the development of events designed to centre participants’ voices
- Evaluated the first iteration of the Camera Connections project
- Joined staff and artists at training sessions, discussions, and social activities



Now, Rachel poses the key question:
so what?
What difference has Home from Home really made to the lives of the people Skippko exists to support?





The Home from Home outcomes agreed with the National Lottery were:

The difference the project aims to make:

The overarching aim of the project is to help to build a community (of beneficiaries) which supports each other, where people can express themselves through creative activities, share their stories and learn more about themselves and each other through a programme of work that is delivered in safe and adaptive spaces.

Outcomes for participants:

- Improving or sustaining mental health and wellbeing.
- Reducing stress and anxiety.
- Improving confidence, self-esteem, motivation, sense of belonging and feeling valued and supported, often linked to the acquisition of new skills.
- Building social connections and support networks and reducing loneliness and social isolation.



How does Skippko maximise its impact?

At its core, Skippko is an arts organisation that develops creative projects with local communities. It works both in community settings and from its base in Holbeck, offering artistic opportunities directly to participants as well as through a range of third-sector partners.

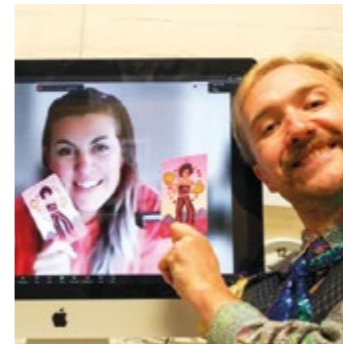
Despite its small team, Skippko consistently delivers high-quality opportunities that people value and actively engage with. Spending time with the organisation – observing sessions and speaking with artists, participants and partners – reveals a distinct and recognisable way of working.



The Artists

Participants in Skippko projects show deep respect, admiration, and loyalty towards the artists they work with. This is consistently highlighted through feedback gathered in focus groups, Sharing Days, and Spotlight interviews.

All Skippko artists are passionate about participatory work and carry significant responsibility for the success of the programmes—and, by extension, the organisation itself. Without them, Skippko would not be what it is today. Notably, there is no sense of hierarchy between artists and participants. Participants often describe developing new skills in an informal, supportive environment, without feeling as though they are on a formal course.



Skippko, in turn, recognises that its work would not be possible without its artists. As freelancers, artists often face financial uncertainty, inconsistent work, and challenges when taking time off. Skippko demonstrates its commitment to valuing and supporting its artists in several ways:

- Paying artists for all aspects of their work, including preparation, delivery of sessions, and attendance at Sharing Days, events, and training
- Engaging two artists to facilitate each group, encouraging collaboration, shared learning, and consistently high-quality delivery
- Listening to artists' feedback and adapting programmes and practices based on their experience
- Providing support when challenges arise within groups
- Supporting artists' wellbeing, both generally and individually, including accommodating personal circumstances that may require time away



Artists greatly appreciate this approach and feel valued by the organisation. In return, they express strong pride in and loyalty to Skippko. They also report feeling heard and empowered to influence how the organisation delivers its work.

Importantly, artists play a key role in helping Skippko understand and respond to the barriers participants face. These include health issues, transport and accessibility challenges, time constraints, family responsibilities such as childcare, and other logistical pressures.



"Although I'm self-employed, I think this is the closest I've ever come to feeling as though I have a job... regular opportunities and the level of contentment and satisfaction and security I feel when I work with them."

"If someone calls me a 'Skippko artist' I am very happy with that... I'm happy to carry (their) branding!"





The Setting

Unit 50 is located in an unprepossessing building on the edge of the city centre. But the space is bright and welcoming, covered in participants artwork, displayed for all to see and for the creators to celebrate. There is a small kitchen in one corner of the room; all are made welcome from the moment they arrive.

For participants that may struggle to get to Barkston House, Skipkko partners with organisations that will either bring groups to them, or will provide their own spaces, in which people may feel more able to take part.

For **Home from Home** participants, the provision of food, refreshments and transport (specifically taxis) all contributed to a feeling of belonging and being valued and are hugely welcomed. In some cases, not having to worry about the cost of taxis enables them to attend, the anxiety of the expense having been removed.

“(They are) always checking our comfort, and being given soup; to let someone give to me when I’m always giving - I so appreciate it.”

“Knowing someone else is paying takes the stress out of it. I don’t have to look at the (taxi) meter going round ‘cos I’m not paying for it.”

The Participants – in their own words

Throughout **Home from Home**, the image of ‘Ripples’ has recurred – the idea that beyond engaging in a Skippko activity in person or at home, peoples’ lives are affected by the time they spend with the organisation in relation to their:



Participants have shared their thoughts on how Skippko affects their lives, often in personal and moving ways, through a range of feedback mechanisms, Sharing Days, a Learning Partner-facilitated focus group, direct to artists and staff and through participant Spotlights.

The reflections people have shared show that all the outcomes of **Home from Home** have been met, in different ways and for different people. On some occasions the comments have come from others who spend time with participants – families, volunteers and partner organisations.

The aspirations of **Home from Home** are deceptively simple, but hard to measure. While it would be possible to address each **Home from Home** outcome here, and seek to evidence how they have been addressed, the words of participants themselves provide the most powerful evidence. The report of the Learning Partner focus group with participants does attribute comments to the programme’s outcomes, and is available here:

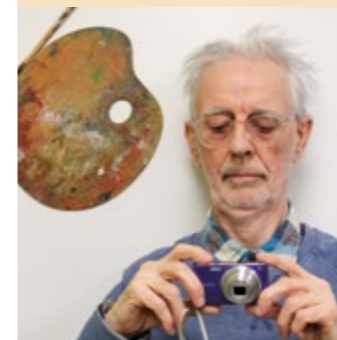
skippko.org.uk/home-from-home-collective-reports-rachel-vernelle-learning-partner

What follows is a number of direct reflections from participants and three detailed Spotlights:

“Socialising with others benefits me emotionally, mentally and physically and inspires me creatively.”



“I can escape the daily grind for a couple of hours, improving my ability to survive another day!”



“Coming here helps me understand myself more. Opens up creativity I didn’t know I had.”



“It’s a wonderful experience that brings a joy you can take back with you when you’ve had time to recharge.”

“...someone is caring for you as well as you being there for others. I’m always giving and at Skippko my jug gets re-filled so I can go back and give again.”



“I retired due to ill-health, my life was so full, I went from that to nothing; this has given me another string to my bow and a new identity.”



Spotlights

Kauser



Kauser's family originates from Pakistan. She has brought up a family while being sole carer of two of her brothers, both disabled. She is a founder member of Better Action for Families and an activist for carers' rights as a member of the Sibs group and as a Care Educator at Leeds University.

Kauser has been a participant in lots of Skippko activities and groups, including at-home packs, the **Community Research Team** and most recently, the **Performance and Making Club**.

"I think my journey starts in COVID because it was a very difficult time having two brothers at home, young men that couldn't understand why they weren't able to do their daily activities.

And then from Carers Leeds, I saw that Skippko were offering sessions at home, via Zoom. So that was my first experience and my goodness, when I signed up and the stuff that they sent home, I thought, right, this is really, really good because I'll be able to do something.

And part and parcel of that was I'm trying to look for my own identity, trying to look for who I am, where all this started from, and trying to get some kind of an insight for myself as to how to make myself grow.

And I think this is where Skippko (came) at the right time... for me because I was so stressed and so down. And when it came, I thought, oh, this is part of my childhood that I never had, being able to sit and draw and express myself.

There's no one saying, oh, you've done that wrong, or, you know, this is how you should do it. I mean, they're there to support and help you when you're not quite sure.



There's no way to say how it has impacted me other than me reflecting on how my life has been up to now.

I come here and I feel so relaxed and some of the things I do, I also take it back home and I introduce them to my brothers and say, look, let's have a go at this. But it has an impact on all of my family, not only my brothers, but my children, my husband. When they see how I come back relaxed and, you know, energised, they actually think, wow, that's lovely, you know?

And then when you do come, I mean, it makes life that much easier because now I've been caring for such a long time and I've always put myself last. And now I'm trying to put myself first.

... when you're sat in a taxi, because you're all of the like-mindedness, you're all carers, you all have different roles that you're playing, but yet we all feel the same.

It's like you're coming to a new family.

The welcoming looks that they give you, the way they smile at you, don't feel out of place. It's like, it does feel like you're coming home. And that for me is beautiful.

"I've no words for it other than it fills me. Yeah, it fills me and nourishes me in the ways that I don't think I've ever been fulfilled."

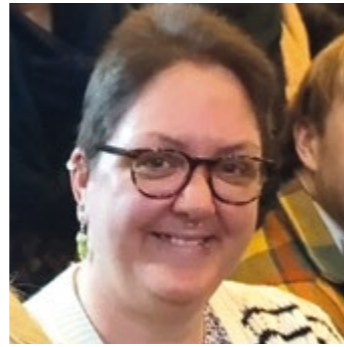
So, yeah, for me, I don't know how, if I hadn't come here, what kind of a person I'd be.

So, because of Skippko, I'm so, different. Thank you to Skippko."



Shelley

Shelley is kept busy with her family; she has three children, all with support needs, and has chronic conditions herself, but makes time to volunteer with a number of art/support organisations and Skippko.



Shelley has participated in a number of Skippko groups, including **Under the Canopy** and the **Monthly Art Club**.

"Yeah, just giving myself time to stop and breathe and be me, I guess, as well, is the big part of it. I'm not just mum, I'm not just, I'm me. And me wants to sit and do planting daffodils."

Genuinely, most of the people at the group are either carers or caring in some capacity.

There's... some element of care there or people that have gone through like mental health issues themselves, which is my... other thing that I've got going on. And they just get it... We just all exist around each other doing these happy things.

"I'm a lot better than I was... when I first started with Skippko, I would literally cry at everything. If somebody asked me to read something out, I'd cry. My anxiety was horrendous. I was so shy."

There's been a few times where I've turned up and I've gone, I don't know that I should be here this week. I don't even know that I can participate in anything because my head's so full and I feel unwell and that's okay. And just, they're like, it's fine, just be here, be around other people doing this stuff.

(My family) all know how much it benefits me. Because then if they're having a tough day or if one of them has a meltdown, then I'm more able to deal with what they need rather than they lose their temper or they get upset and then I retaliate... because I'm tired or I'm hurting or I'm stressed or whatever. Instead, I've got that kind of headspace to go, right, okay, take a step back."



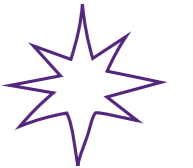
Derek

Derek is of retirement age, married and a regular volunteer and participant with Age UK, Leeds.



Derek engaged with Skippko's **Camera Connections** project at the Age UK Hub and came to the exhibition at Skippko.

"I like the social aspect. And that's what I like about Skippko, because it's all social. We're doing things, particularly for me, doing stuff that I've perhaps not done for a long time, or I'm learning things for new."



And having been down there, it's like we were painting stones one time. And I thought, this is fascinating... I remember when I was a kid, I used to go and collect stones off the beach, and we'd decorate them and put on our steps at home as children. Here I am, almost 70; I'm doing it now.

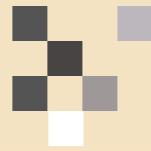
I didn't know how to take black and white photographs on my camera... So I went home and I experimented, doing all sorts of things with my camera. I couldn't figure it out. Then one day I did... I told Nicki and Sally; I was determined to show them that I'd done it. And they were amazed, yeah. I'd learnt on my own, you know... and I was so happy for myself.

It's just one of those magical places, like you're stepping into, like, through a mirror into something that's just different, you know, a place of comfort. It's like a childlike dream where you can sit, relax, enjoy the atmosphere, enjoy the company, have a nice cup of tea and just look around and say, this is wonderful... Yeah, it's just a wonderful place."

"I think Sally and Nicky are the most amazing people on the planet. They really are truly wonderful, patient. Really lovely people."



What have we learnt from Home from Home?



Rachel, the Home from Home Learning Partner, selects some of our key learning:

To consult or to share?: living our values in the way we engage

Skipkko has always been mindful of, and successful in, gathering the views of participants in its projects. Continuing to explore provision with participants was a clear intention coming into **Home from Home**. But the three-year timescale of funding brought with it the opportunity to explore how 'consultation' could be more meaningful than a one-way collection of wishes or desires. And Rachel was able to bring her knowledge of community consultation and her role as critical friend to these considerations.

The desire to be ethical and non-extractive led to a re-design of the first consultation day. The day was initially conceived to begin to explore how participants might become more involved in running Skipkko and establishing an Advisory Council. Instead, it became a Sharing Day, aiming to nurture relationships, build trust and make the event a rich experience for everyone. In total, there were three Sharing Days, to which all participants and involved partners were invited, and two project-specific days.

The Sharing Days became a highlight of Home from Home. Participants could take pride in displays of their own work, explore what other groups had been doing, meet new people and take part in fun, meaningful activities on the day. Transport was provided where it was needed and quality, home-made food served to all. Participant feedback on the days was overwhelmingly positive.

The information gathered by Skipkko on these days informed what projects were delivered and how. And it was evident that participants valued coming together and sharing the experience of the day. A number demonstrated their willingness to go deeper into how they felt about engaging with Skipkko and what difference this makes to their lives. The effect of Sharing Days was cumulative; the trust and confidence of participants had to be earned across all three days. By the third Sharing Day, collecting evidence around the outcomes of **Home from Home**, which was the aim of the event for Skipkko, produced rich testimony from participants.





Skippko already gathered feedback in a number of ways, and through **Home from Home** participant influence can be seen through:

1. Project-specific group feedback being collected in often creative ways, rather than the use of standard forms
2. Project-specific consultation events (**Under the Canopy, Community Research Team**) ensuring participants are at the centre of planning for the next iteration of these groups
3. Online surveying
4. 3 x Sharing Days – each built on the learning from the previous one, very much informed by what attendees had said.

Many of the activities that formed Years 2 and 3 of **Home from Home** were the direct results of participants' articulated desires and needs. For example:

- **Monthly Art Club** developed in response to participants wanting somewhere to go once a project is completed so they can continue their practice. While supported by artists, participants can bring their own ideas and practice and lead sessions, so developing leadership and facilitation skills.
- **Camera-arderie** group is now virtually standing alone, but on an 'elastic band' of support from artists that have been with them from the outset of their activities
- **Performance and Making Club** is underpinned by high levels of co-creation
- **In the Frame** – a 'scratch' event held in July 2025, gave participants space, alongside artists, to demonstrate their skills and interests to an invited audience.



As we have seen, Skippko has a commitment to co-design in all the projects it delivers. Through this, participants can see that they are taken seriously and listened to. Beyond co-design of projects, Skippko is also now committed to consciously ensuring consultation is never extractive; whenever staff are considering how to gather the views of participants, they now apply the test of whether the method they are planning gives something back. Participants give their time, energy, views and often, personal testimonies; what opportunities for reflection and learning are being offered in return? And how will Skippko close the feedback loop by demonstrating how participant input has informed the decisions and actions it was designed to influence?

What does 'participant-led' actually mean?

The **National Lottery Community Fund** (which funded **Home from Home**) wants to support projects that enable "communities to shape the decisions that affect their lives". This tends to be translated into meaning that programmes and projects supported by them should be 'participant-led'. In turn, this can have a narrow definition, with grant recipients undertaking to explore more participant influence and/or direct participant management in their activities and organisations.

At first, Skippko fell into this trap, soon realising that promoting the idea of 'leaders' created a hitherto irrelevant divide. Over time, Skippko seriously and open-mindedly considered what 'participant-led' meant for the organisation. The Skippko 'way' is that participants are empowered and supported to co-create; a core belief in this way of working characterises artists' approach to their practice, which feeds into how they support participants to achieve their goals. So, did 'participant leadership' mean something beyond this? And if so, what?

Over the course of the programme, conversations have shown what a nuanced issue this is and one that continues to evolve for Skippko and its participants. An example of this nuance is the early idea Skippko had of developing an Advisory Council of participants. As its understanding of 'participant leadership' evolved, so did its thinking around this.

It became clear that simply asking people if they wanted to join such a Council was too big a 'nought to sixty' jump; but development of relationships with a core of participants, their engagement with Sharing Days and other events and increasing numbers desirous of giving back to Skippko through volunteering, has changed the focus. It is still intended to explore with this core a 'reference group' to which staff can bring ideas and challenges, seek views and support and hear the ambitions and desires of its participants.

A number of participants have said and demonstrated that they do want to give back and volunteer on an ad hoc basis. Examples during **Home from Home** have included leading activities, admin tasks, clearing spaces and setting up for activities. Skippko is actively considering how it can build on these offers of help in future.

"But I hope that I can help to develop Skippko because I am now helping them with time... because I thought this is so important for carers like myself... If I feel this good, I want someone else to feel this good, too."

"Because I've got extra space in my head now, I'm doing other things as well. Like for instance, I'm right keen on looking at differences in how I can help with research and stuff. So again, that's something different for me."



How do we stay in our lane?

Until **Home from Home**, Skippko thought of itself as a visual arts organisation and would continue to describe itself as such. But increasingly, as participants develop their practice and through it articulate the challenges they face in daily life, Skippko's work can firmly locate itself in the Creative Health landscape.

The aims of **Home from Home** centred on outcomes around health and wellbeing; in successfully meeting these outcomes, an unintended consequence of its work has been to stray towards providing a therapeutic service.

Staff and artists have increasingly identified health and wellbeing needs of participants and feedback told us a number wanted to go deeper with opportunities for reflection. But the organisation recognised it did not have the expertise to go further into this space and that it had safeguarding responsibilities towards both participants and artists. It has been difficult for Skippko to 'stay in its lane', when giving people space to articulate their feelings, reflect on experiences and display associated emotions.

Skippko concluded that its remit, expertise and skill is as a visual arts organisation, not a therapeutic one. But it also recognised a responsibility to those participants who have opened themselves up over the course of the project and beyond and has piloted something new in response. This short project focused on Skippko's core work; art and creativity. Through creative activities and simple routines, the **Me Time** project helped participants equip themselves with a set of practices through which they can claim 'me time'.



*We're not waiting
for our me-time
anymore; we're
going to make it!*

Last Word

Skippko, Skippko

By Kauser Iqbal



What can I say?

What you have done for me
is what I have been searching for
all my life.

Someone who takes care of me
from the moment I leave my home,
as the protective layers begin to
slip away.

I feel like a VIP.

My beating heart steadies
as I walk into your warm embrace,
an environment like no other,
away from the hustle and bustle,
serene beneath a canopy of greenery.

Hands made busy,
minds given space,
to create alone
or together
with my newly made family,
my new friends.

You helped me find me.
I don't know when,
but you did.

You reached my soul

and nurtured it
with soup
and Matthew's hot concoction surprise,
with stories that carry you
to lands where forgetting feels gentle.

Who cares for the invisible carer?

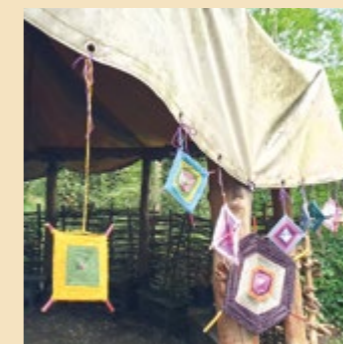
Skippko, Skippko.

The one hidden beneath many layers,
the one who wears many hats,
the one no one sees,
yet you do.
You do.

Time flies with Skippko.
Longing sets in as you leave,
hoping the next session
won't be too far away.

How I needed you,
Skippko, Skippko,
my caring, nurturing friend.

Thank you.



I love to show my creations to friends + family

So inspirational
Love the
different
projects
Skipper



Playment
Play
craft

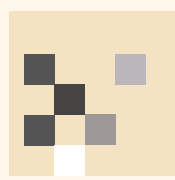


I'm always giving +
at Skipper my jug gets
re-filled so I can go back
and give again...

I HAVE LEARNED MORE ABOUT ART AND IT HAS HELPED WITH MY ARTWORK
I THANK YOU



I came as I am
I have gained
to skipper



home from home



SKIPPKO

www.skipper.org.uk