



The Newcastle Mum's Club project- NEEMC report 2025-2026



The Newcastle Mum's Club project- NEEMC (2025 - 2026), was led by School of Polish Language and Culture (SPLC, in Newcastle upon Tyne, Community Interest Company- number: 11485454).

Working in partnership with the International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS, charity number: 1186618), which established the first Eastern European (EE) women's group in the North East of England, this project successfully delivered weekly term-time meetings for women and their children.



By hosting these sessions at the SPLC while older children attended supplementary Polish language education, the project maximised attendance and accessibility.

The initiative targeted at least 50 women and 35 children, focusing on creative activities such as arts and crafts to foster social inclusion and reduce isolation. While the primary focus remained on Polish women, the sessions were inclusive of all women living in the local area. Each session typically lasted two hours.

The sessions were led by a local mother from the EE community who had previously developed the ICOS Mums' Club and served as the project's facilitator.

Operations:

The SPLC's Community Facilitator supported the project by connecting women to the sessions, managing social media and poster advertising, and overseeing finances and venue logistics.

ICOS's Community Development Officer shared institutional learning and provided essential oversight for risk assessments and safeguarding. With over seven years of experience, she offered one-to-one support for complex issues, including domestic abuse, hate crime, and navigating public services.

The partners worked closely together and met four times as a team during the duration of the project, in order to make sure that close and effective cooperation was in place.

Evaluation and performance:

Over the course of the project, outcomes were monitored using the ICOS evaluation strategy, which was developed alongside an independent consultant and based on NPC's Theory of Change in Ten Steps (<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/ten-steps/>). Having established a robust evaluation plan (based on NPC's model:

<https://www.thinknpc.org/events-and-training/>), and introduced new impact-capture tools (e.g. the

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale-

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>),

as well as introduced the Lamplight client management system, ICOS was in a good position to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Our entry/exit/evaluation forms included include Likert scale and open questions. We have also gathered case studies.

The project targets were as follows- at least:

-28 women will report improved wellbeing, 25- improved confidence, 20- creative skills.

-at least 50 women and 35 children to take part in the activities

The project has largely met, and in some cases - exceeded its targets.

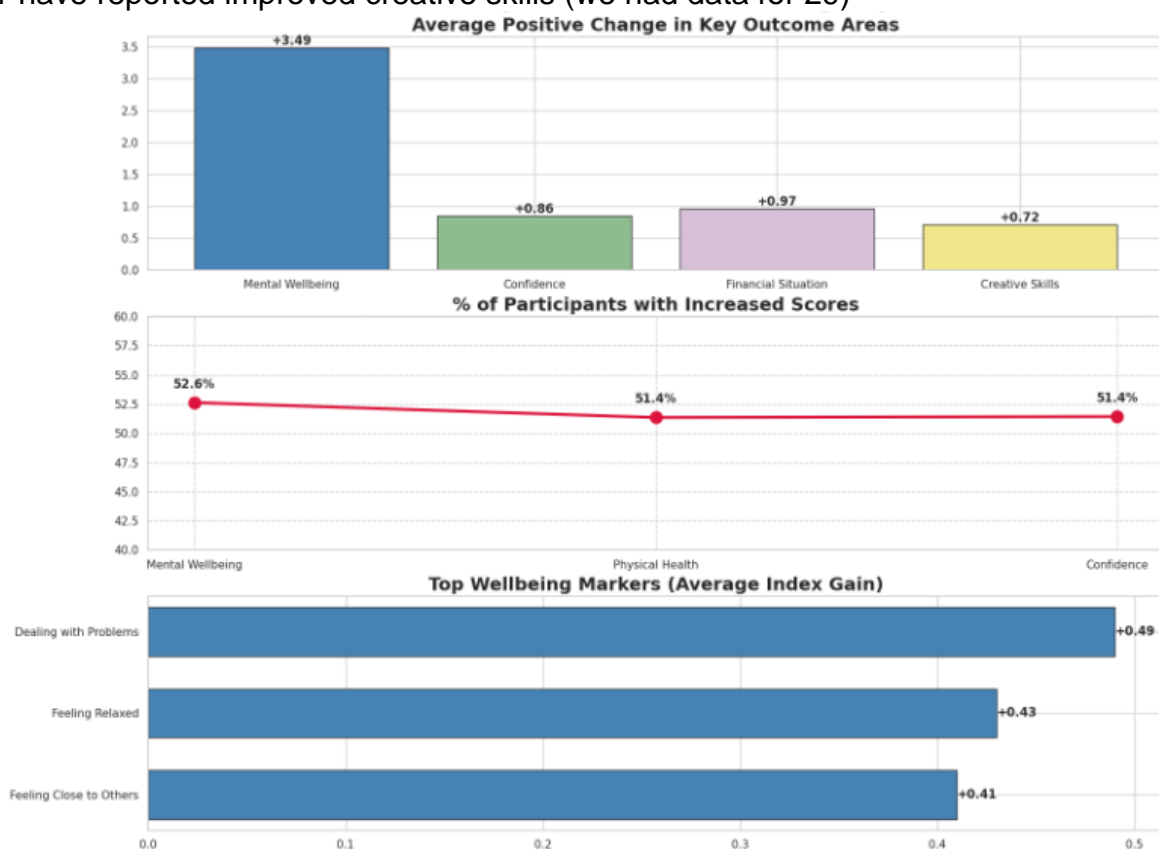
-51 women have taken part in the activities

-64 children have also taken part, massively exceeding the original target of 35

-20 have been able to improve their wellbeing (we had data for 38)

-18 have reported improved confidence (we had data for 35)

-11 have reported improved creative skills (we had data for 29)



Altogether, 115 individuals have benefited from the project, indicating significant value for money- £173.91 per person.

We attribute the slight differences in what we have achieved to not being able to contact all the women- had we been able to, we would have certainly been able to fully meet at least the wellbeing and confidence outcomes we had set.

We have also achieved some additional outcomes, including 16 women reporting being able to feeling more optimistic about the future and 16 women feeling closer to other people.



Additionally, when it comes to social Integration: 100% of respondents (but 45 people out of 51 taking part) stated they met new people from different backgrounds or made new friends.

The project provided a safe and supportive space for the women and their children, bringing them together, and helping them to reach their potential through a range of sessions, such as:

- Seasonal arts and crafts- e.g., using leaves/acorns to create autumn themed art, or Christmas decoration making.
- Themed activities, e.g. local heritage and local history- e.g., trips to a local gallery.
- Workshops delivered by women from the group themselves, e.g., print making/stone painting/macramas.

The project has delivered a total of 28 biweekly workshops and sessions, exceeding the original target of 26:

- **May 3, 2025** – Organizational meeting for the Mum's Club at the Polish school; workshop: painting national flags.
- **May 10, 2025** – T-shirt painting workshop using specialized textile paints.
- **May 17, 2025** – Workshop on creating keychains and bookmarks, and stone painting using the **dot painting** technique.
- **June 7 & 14, 2025** – Handmade greeting cards (Theme: "Cards for Teachers" for the end of the school year); a two-part workshop.
- **June 21 & 28, 2025** – Workshop on decorating T-shirts using the **thermal transfer** method, using a printer and heat press.
- **September 20, 2025** – Watercolor painting workshop.
- **September 27, 2025** – Workshop on handmade decorative letters using textiles (**upcycling**).
- **October 4, 2025** – Workshop using textiles to create Halloween decorations (decorative pumpkins) – **upcycling**.
- **October 11, 2025** – Workshop on handmade autumn garlands using natural materials. Yoga session led by Marta Jackson.
- **October 18 & November 8, 2025** – Workshop on making academic caps (mortarboards); preparation and assistance for the school's Independence Day celebrations. Yoga with Marta Jackson and a workout led by personal trainer Monika Wojno.
- **November 15, 22, & 29, 2025** – Three-part ceramics workshop (modeling, painting, and glazing). Workout with Monika Wojno.
- **December 6, 2025** – Workshop on creating Christmas lanterns using the **Decoupage** method. Workout with Monika Wojno.
- **December 13, 2025** – Christmas event, St. Nicholas Day (*Mikołajki*), and the school Christmas Eve dinner (*Wigilia*); PSG women's meeting. Yoga session led by Marta Jackson.
- **January 10 & 17, 2026** – Painting T-shirts with textile paints.



- **January 24 & 31, 2026** – Two-part workshop on creating Carnival masks modeled after Venetian masks. Yoga with Marta Jackson and a workout with Monika Wojno.
- **February 7, 2026** – Carnival Ball event; yoga session led by volunteer Marta Jackson.
- **February 28, 2026** – Workshop on handmade Easter decorations using recycled materials. Workout with Monika Wojno.
- **March 7 & 14, 2026** – Two-part **cold porcelain** workshop: modeling and decorating using paint and the decoupage method. Yoga with Marta Jackson.
- **March 21, 2026** – Workshop on creating Easter decorations, egg painting, and using the decoupage method. PSG board meeting. Yoga with Marta Jackson.
- **March 28, 2026** – Floristry workshop: glass vases with decorations and natural greenery. Yoga session led by Marta Jackson.

The project was an opportunity for families to keep in touch with their ancestral traditions. E.g., through painting flags in May (coinciding with Polish Constitution Day). Patriotism: Making academic caps and assisting with Independence Day (November 11th) in late October. Mikołajki and Wigilia (St. Nicholas and Christmas Eve) dominate December.

The activities have been delivered in an environmentally – conscious way. For example, autumn themes were explored in September/October using natural materials and "upcycled" textiles.

Aside from numbers, the impact of the project is also illustrated by the stories, e.g.,

On Mental Health and Wellbeing

- "A project that improve my mental health and helps me make new friends"
- "A pleasant atmosphere."
- "A pleasant time spend having interesting conversations."
- "Wonderful gatherings for women."

On Social Connection

- "I made some new friends making carnival mask out of paper"
- "Meeting new friends, crafting skills."
- "Meeting new friends, creative skills"
- "New friendships, new skills, crafts"
- "new people"

On Activities and Learning



- "Creating useful decorations, yes artistic skills."
- "Decoupage ideas - wonderful"
- "Very good project, yes decoupage"
- "Great / creative activities & amazing project lead :)"
- "Plenty of arts & crafts."

On Project Quality

- "Project Mum's Club Newcastle is fantastic !"
- "Well organised and explained"
- "Wonderful event"
- "fantastic events"

Every participant who provided feedback (100%) reported meeting new people from different backgrounds or making new friends. While there is likely to be some bias there, given the fact that some have not responded and that the feedback was gathered by project staff and volunteers, it appears that the project has had a high overall impact.

Case studies:

Case study- Newcastle Mums Club- 1

I have been a member of the workshop run by Malgosia (sessional worker) since April 2025. I had one child attending the Polish school from September 2024, and my second child joined in September 2025, so I am able to clearly compare what the experience was like before the workshops began.

Before April, I would simply drop my child off at school and wait around. Since joining the workshops, Saturdays have completely changed for me. I now have the opportunity to meet regularly with Malgosia and other mums, take part in creative activities, and truly enjoy this time instead of just passing it.

Every Saturday Malgosia comes with a new idea—ranging from making professional-looking cards, Christmas wreaths and carnival masks, to painting T-shirts and so on. These workshops give us a chance to bond, share our stories, and have a laugh in a safe and welcoming space.

Malgosia is wonderful company—kind, warm, and beautiful inside and out. On top of everything she does for us, she also goes above and beyond by helping with organising major events such as Jasełka, and even assisting with cleaning up after the children's lunch, which I am sure is not part of her job description.

She always makes sure we have a hot drink and she always treats us to yummy homemade Polish cake. She is absolutely brilliant, and I genuinely look forward to spending time with her and the other mums while waiting for my children to finish school.



Sylwia

Case study- Newcastle Mums Club- 2

As both a regular participant and a volunteer yoga instructor at the Mums Club (based at the Polish School of Language and Culture in Newcastle), I have seen firsthand how vital this space is for the international community. Funded and supported by ICOS (International Community Organisation of Sunderland), this club is far more than just a weekly meetup; it is a lifeline for cultural preservation and mental well-being.

More Than Just a Meeting: The Activities

The club strikes a perfect balance between structured growth and casual connection. On any given Saturday, the atmosphere is a mix of focused creativity and joyful chatter.

- * **Creative Crafts:** The craft sessions are a highlight. From traditional folk art to modern DIY projects, these activities provide a meditative outlet for mums while their children are in lessons nearby. It's a space where we can create something beautiful while sharing stories.

- * **The Social Pillar:** The "socialising" aspect isn't just an add-on; it's the heart of the club. Navigating life in a different country can be isolating, and having a dedicated space to speak our native language and share experiences—from navigating local services to celebrating native traditions—is invaluable.

A Perspective from the Yoga Mat:

As the volunteer lead for the Yoga sessions, I've had the unique privilege of watching the physical and emotional transformation of our members.

- * **Holistic Well-being:** We focus on gentle flow and mindfulness, specifically designed to relieve the "mental load" that many mothers carry.

- * **Accessibility:** By offering these sessions within the club, we remove the barriers that often prevent immigrant women from accessing wellness spaces (such as cost, language gaps, or lack of childcare).

- * **Community Strength:** There is a powerful energy in a room full of women practicing together. As a volunteer, seeing a participant arrive stressed and leave with a smile and a straighter posture is incredibly rewarding.

Why It Matters:

The Mums Club serves as a bridge. It connects the foreign communities in Newcastle with the broader support network provided by ICOS, ensuring that we aren't just surviving in the North East, but thriving.

My Final Thought:

Whether you come for the yoga, the crafts, or simply for a warm cup of tea and a chat in native language, you leave feeling seen and supported. It is a testament to what happens when community organisations invest in grassroots well-being. I only hope for this project to continue.



Case study 3:

I admire Gosia's (sessional worker's) dedication and her approach to each project we do.

Gosia has an amazing work ethic. She is intelligent, funny and resourceful. Her skills make the project come together every Saturday we meet.

She brings so much to the team especially with her presentations from start to finish.

Gosia is very organised and she has the ability to work with everyone she meets.

I enjoy very much participating in Gosia's Saturday meetings, chatting over coffee and her amazing homemade cakes.

Her creativity inspires me very day. She makes us laugh so much that we go home with a massive smile on our faces.

Involvement:

Both- the school and ICOS exist to serve their community, and recognise that high levels of involvement and coproduction and necessary to ensure that we meet the needs of the people we serve. In the case of this project, a bespoke Project Steering Group was formed to shape the project. The PSG has met 4 times during the duration of the project, involving 10 different members, and discussed which activities could be delivered and how. The group would very much like to continue this work, and are hoping that it is sustained in the future.

Even more meetings of the PSG would have happened, but it took some time to form the group, partly due to seasonality of the activities (e.g., activities only taking part during school term).

This shows a high level of involvement amongst the group, **given that 20% of the women got involved in directing the activities.**

Demographics:

Age and Gender

The group consists of adult women, primarily in their middle parenting years:

- **Gender:** 100% of those who recorded their gender (43 members) identified as **Female**.
- **Age Profile:** The group is dominated by women aged **35–54**:
 - **35–44 years:** 25 members (the largest age bracket).
 - **45–54 years:** 12 members.
 - **25–34 years:** 4 members.
 - **55+ years:** 3 members.

Family Structure



As a "Mum's Club," the demographic was defined by childcare responsibilities:

- **Children:** Registration data confirms that **98% of mothers** (43 out of 44) have at least one child taking part in activities.
- **Household Size:** Most families have **1 child** (24 families) or **2 children** (17 families) participating.

Geography and Socio-Economics

While based in Newcastle, the group also drew participants from across the wider area.

- **Location:** Members reside in various areas including **Fawdon, Wingrove, and Monkchester** within Newcastle, as well as surrounding areas like **Chester-Le-Street, Morpeth, and Washington**.

Conclusion:

The **Newcastle Mum's Club** project has demonstrated a profound impact on the Polish community in Newcastle, successfully transitioning from a creative workshop series into a vital support network. Over the course of the sessions, the project engaged 51 women, effectively addressing the dual challenges of social isolation and maternal mental health. The data paints a clear picture of success: **100% of participants** reported expanding their social circles, while over half recorded measurable improvements in their mental wellbeing scores.

The project's strength lies in its holistic approach, blending therapeutic creative activities like decoupage with practical skill-building. Beyond the arts, participants reported significant gains in self-confidence and their ability to deal with problems, highlighting the project's role in fostering resilience. The high rate of family engagement, with at least 64 children participating alongside their mothers, underscores the club's importance as a multi-generational community pillar.

Ultimately, participant feedback—describing the atmosphere as "amazing" and "mental health-improving" validates the project as a high-quality, essential intervention. By providing a culturally and linguistically accessible space, the Mum's Club has not only taught new skills but has woven a stronger, more connected social fabric for Polish families in the North East.

We are extremely grateful to the funder- the National Lottery Community Fund for funding this work.











More information available at:

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