



# **An Evaluation of The Phoenix Project: Therapeutic drama for survivors of domestic abuse**

## **Final Report**

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## Executive Summary: Impact of The Phoenix Project

- E1 This report relates the findings of an evaluation of The Phoenix Project, a six-day venture to involve survivors of domestic abuse in drama activities. The evaluation was conducted between the 12th - 14th and 19th - 21st March 2018.
- E2 The objectives of the evaluation were to assess whether and how effective the project has impacted on participants' communication skills, team-work, sharing ideas and solving problems, self-confidence, self-esteem and personal achievement, ability to bring knowledge and options to the process; and mental wellbeing.
- E3 A mixed methods design included administration of the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale, self-completed project evaluation forms and semi-structured interviews with the project participants.
- E4 Findings: Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale - A total of six women completed the WEMWBS questionnaire (response rate 60%). The mean score before intervention was approximately 34.3 with a standard deviation (SD) of 11.2 and the mean score after intervention was approximately 52 with a SD of 8.7. The overall mean WEMWBS score was approximately 17.2 (SD 10.6;  $P < .001$ ). Six of the women (100%) had meaningful positive changes in wellbeing. Therefore, using the WEMWBS to evaluate The Phoenix Project showed significant reduction in low wellbeing (from 83% to 17%) and significant increase in moderate wellbeing (from 17% to 83%) between the start and end dates of the project. The WEMWBS demonstrated a meaningful positive change in participants' wellbeing from low mental wellbeing to moderate mental wellbeing. These results provide tangible evidence that The Phoenix Project was successful in improving the mental wellbeing of women who have experienced domestic abuse. However, caution should be applied when interpreting the WEMWBS result from this study to a wider population as this was a small-scale study which examined data from six participants which was smaller than the required minimum of 30 participants.
- E5 Findings: Project self-evaluation forms - Analysis of data from the self-evaluation forms revealed that by far the use of theatre and drama was the most memorable element of the project for 100% (n=8) of the women who took part in the project. Similarly, 100% of the women reported that they enjoyed the project and would recommend it to someone else. 62.5% of the women agreed that they have more confidence and are better at getting on with other people as a result of The Phoenix Project, while 75% felt they have learnt new skills which they can use and want to make changes in their life as a result of the project. Only 37.5% of the women have been to The Grand Theatre as an adult, have been involved in a theatre/drama project or have ever been involved in an art project before. However, as a result of taking part in The Phoenix Project, 87.5% of the women have been encouraged to engage in art related activities while 100% of the women are interested in participating in a similar project in the future. From the general comments, participants reported actualising self-realisation and no longer having the feeling of isolation.

- E6 Findings: Interview data – Interviews revealed the positive impacts the project had on participants; the project improved participants' wellbeing in term of increasing their confidence, self-worth, improving listening and communication skills, as well as team work, sharing ideas and knowledge contribution, problem solving and encouraging social engagement. This provides evidence supporting the short-term effectiveness of The Phoenix Project.
- R1 This was a small scale study evaluating data from eight participants and the positive impact of the project on participants' lives is to be applauded. Although the results from the evaluation showed significant improvement for the women on the project, as a general rule a minimum of at least 30 participants is needed to complete the WEMWBS questionnaire. Further studies are therefore needed to examine the impact of the project using data from at least 30 participants. **We therefore recommend that the pilot project be continued in its current form and that data continue to be collected using the WEMWBS to obtain a larger sample for a more robust statistical analysis.**
- R2 Data for the WEMWBS did not include the collection of participant demographic data although it was requested during interviews. Since scores appeared to vary when age was taken into account, **we recommend that further evaluation is needed to investigate variability in age distribution of the group by WEMWBS scores with the collection of demographic data at outset.**
- R3 Whilst this evaluation provides evidence to support the success of the pilot of The Phoenix Project, its impact on the mental wellbeing of participants was for a short-term project. **We therefore recommend future project evaluation to investigate the long-term impact of the project on participants.**

## 1 Introduction

Geese Theatre Company was established in the UK by Clark Baim in 1987 and has over 30 years of experience of rehabilitation through the use of arts and interactive theatre within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Geese Theatre Company, 2018). Geese Theatre Company has worked in more than 150 custodial institutions with over 250,000 offenders and people at risk (Geese Theatre Company, 2018). The company includes a team of theatre practitioners who present collaborative theatre and drama-based work (Geese Theatre Company, 2018). They also train staff and offer consultation services for probation services, prisons, young offender institutions, youth offending teams, secure hospitals and related agencies through the UK and abroad. The company has a long history of delivering projects both in the field of domestic abuse (primarily delivering programme with perpetrators of abuse) and with women, including projects delivered in the women's prison estate. For example, in 2017, the company was commissioned to work with women in HMP Peterborough to explore their experience of motherhood (Histprisonhealth, 2017).

The Phoenix Project was an idea conceived by a member of staff from Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to draw on art therapy principles relating to the therapeutic experience of drama and art-making with a group (Wood, 2000) to improve mental wellbeing in terms of self-confidence, self-esteem, personal achievement, communication skills, ability to engage in team-work, sharing ideas and solving problems, ability to bring knowledge and options to the process of women who had experienced intimate partner violence in the past. In collaboration with Geese Theatre Company, The Haven Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, a six-day session programme grounded in social learning theory, role theory and cognitive theory (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002) was piloted. These theories propose that learning should be active, concrete and based on the use of role play to model and practice new skills (Chapman and Hough, 1998; Goldstein and Winner, 2011) and that arts practiced using a range of exercises, games, role play, and drama are developed with the aim of promoting personal development and change (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002). The core activity of the project is the provision of a six-day drama-based course delivered in a community venue.

### **The use of masks**

Masks are one of the oldest theatrical conventions and are used as a metaphor by Geese Theatre Company to express the notion that everyone wears a mask (Harkins, et al., 2009). Masks are used in sessions to provide a practical tool to observe both how people behave outwardly to others and their inner processes that support those behaviours or roles. According to Baim, Brookes and Mountford (2002), masks portray what participants show to the outside world and also conceal what they feel inside. Once the mask has been introduced to the participants, two basic strategies are used to look at the meaning of the mask. First, the mask can be lifted in order to encounter the hidden thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs of a character and secondly, is to consider the nature of the mask itself and its purpose in the project (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002). Over the course of two weeks, The Phoenix Project engaged participants in a range of activities from responding to short theatre performances used as stimuli for discussion, game playing which involves problem-solving and co-operation, developing the narrative of a relatable fictional character and discussing and sharing personal experiences. At the start of each session, participants

were asked about their feelings while at the end of each session, each participant received feedback on their strengths as measured on a scale of 1 to 10. In order to put this evaluation into context, it is important that domestic violence is first defined and how it affects mental wellbeing discussed.

### 1.1 Domestic violence

Domestic violence (also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse or intimate partner violence) is one of the most common forms of violence against women. Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon as well as a fundamental violation of women's human rights and it occurs in all settings irrespective of social, economic status or religious background (Manship and Perry, 2012). The terms refer to physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence as well as controlling behaviour by an intimate partner (World Health Organisation, 2012). Male intimate partners or ex-partners have been identified as the most common perpetrators of violence against women (Stöckl and Penhale, 2015).

Evidence suggests that domestic violence affects women's mental health through direct pathways such as causing serious injury, and indirectly such as chronic health problems that arise from prolonged stress (World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010). World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2010) goes on to suggest that abused women have a higher rate of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, lack of sleep, eating disorders and reduced personal autonomy than non-abused women. Therefore, there is a need for programmes targeted at improving the mental health of victims of abuse.

According to Murphy and Smith (2010), programs grounded in strategies using communication skills training, screenplays and roleplaying on handling stressful experiences, and increasing help-seeking behaviours are more tangible in providing behavioural changes among individuals. However, further evaluation is needed (Shorey, Zucosky, Brasfield, et al., 2012). Additionally, in a non-systematic search and summary report on the link between self-esteem and intimate partner violence, The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health reported a lack of evidence directly linking self-esteem promotion and positive outcomes related to intimate partner violence in either adolescents or adults (The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2012).

### 1.2 Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing can be described as a state of happiness and life satisfaction as well as good mental functioning, good relationships with others and self-realisation/acceptance (Putz, O'Hara, Taggart and Stewart-Brown, 2012). According to World Health Organisation (WHO), mental wellbeing is defined as:

“...a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO, 2013, p.5).



There is much past research and practice focusing on mental health problems and on the prevention of developing mental illness rather than on wellbeing (Putz, et al., 2012). Over the years, improving mental wellbeing and social inclusion has become an increasing important government priority in England (HM Government, 2011; Wilson, Secker, Kent, and Keay, 2017) and, as such, a comprehensive report providing evidence on the impact of mental capital and wellbeing has been published (Foresight Project, 2008). The potential for utilising theatre-based programs in this regard has also gained substantial interest (Clift, Camic, Chapman, et al., 2009). The use of theatre and drama provides a unique approach to working with women who have been abused in the past. Although there is evidence that supports the use of theatre and drama performance to improve mental health and wellbeing among offenders (Harkins, et al., 2009; Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley, 2013) and vulnerable women (Leverett-Morris, 2014), the use of theatre and drama to assess the mental wellbeing or wellbeing trend over time of women who have been abused by their intimate partners is limited (Putz, et al., 2012).

Collecting data before and after The Phoenix Project for women who have experience domestic violence can tell us a lot about the impact of the project on mental wellbeing and how successful the project has been. This evaluation was therefore built into Geese Theatre Company art's provision with the aim of contributing to the evidence of the pilot project's success.

## **2 Evaluation Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the evaluation was to assess whether the pilot of The Phoenix Project has been successful in a number of areas, and to provide evidence of the pilot's success. To meet the stated aim, the evaluation assessed whether and how effective the project has impacted on participants':

- communication;
- team-work, sharing ideas and solving problems;
- self-confidence, self-esteem and personal achievement;
- ability to bring knowledge and options to the process; and
- mental wellbeing.

## **3 Methodology and Ethics**

### **3.1 Design**

A mixed method approach was adopted using the before and after 14-item Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS)<sup>1</sup>, self-completed project evaluation forms and semi-structured face-to-face interviews to explore participants' experiences, opinions and feelings of their involvement in the pilot. The Phoenix Project was carried out between 12th - 14th and 19th - 21st March 2018. It was delivered three days per week for two weeks and was able to accommodate 10 women.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

## 3.2 Participants

All participants who had signed the consent form (n=8 – administered by Geese Theatre Company staff and subsequently verified by the researcher) were contacted to ascertain their willingness and /or availability to participate in the evaluation. Participants (n=8) were all women and survivors of domestic abuse and were current and ex-service users of The Haven Wolverhampton; they were informed and recommended by their support worker as being appropriate for the project. Three participants were outsourced.

## 3.3 14-item Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS)<sup>2</sup>

The 14-item WEMWBS was administered to participants (n=6 – 2 did not complete the scales) before the start of the project and after the project. The WEMWBS is a pre-existing validated self-complete questionnaire designed to measure the mental wellbeing among people aged 13 and over in the UK (Putz, et al., 2012). The tool assesses aspects of positive mental health that involves people's feelings, thoughts and contentment (Putz, et al., 2012). The WEMWBS is used to measure changes over time and is therefore used to measure improvement in wellbeing within services, interventions, projects, or programmes (Putz, et al., 2012). The scale produces a single score. It contained 14-items that participants are required to rate that best describes their experience two weeks before and after the project, where 1 = 'None of the time' and 5 = 'All of the time'. Six completed questionnaires were returned.

## 3.4 Self-completion project evaluation forms

A bespoke self-completed questionnaire designed by Geese Theatre Company and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre<sup>3</sup> was used to collect quantitative data after the project. This contained seven items that participants were required to rate as to their level of agreement, using a five-point scale where 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree'. Items are related to the impact of the project in terms of improving participants' confidence, ability to socialise with people, learn new skills, make changes in their lives as well as enjoying the project and recommending it to others. The questionnaire also contained sections for qualitative feedback and quantitative questions related to visiting the theatre, drama and art related activities. Eight of the questionnaires were completed and returned.

## 3.5 Face-to-face interviews

To gather verbal feedback from the project's participants, one semi-structured face-to-face interview was conducted with each participant at the end of the pilot. A bespoke interview schedule<sup>4</sup> was designed to investigate the perceived effectiveness of the project from women's perspectives. Participants were asked to indicate if they would be interested in taking part in an interview. Those who agreed were invited to participate in the interview at their preferred venue. Seven participants accepted their invitation, and completed and

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix V

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix IV

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix III

signed the consent form which was handed to the researcher prior to the interview. A week after the project, participants were contacted via telephone by the researcher after initial introductions with the women had been made by the project lead.

Three women declined an interview stating child care issues and lack of time, leaving four women available. With permission of The Wolverhampton Grand Theatre and The Haven Wolverhampton, interviews were carried out in a quiet room in both venues. Interviews each lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were digitally recorded using high quality digital devices owned by the VAWGRC and were subsequently subjected to thematic analysis.

### **3.6 Ethics**

The evaluation was conducted in adherence to a set of ethical principles, which set out the responsibilities and values relevant to research. The research was led and delivered by highly trained researchers. The researchers also adhered to the Ethical Guidelines of the British Psychological Society on research. No participant was coerced into providing data for the study; rather, fully informed consent was gained from all participants before any data collection began. Full information was given to participants about the aims of the project and the methods to be used. A negative response to taking part was respected and participants were informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time during the data collection period. All data collection methods were designed, and questions were asked, with sensitivity to the topic to minimise the risk of participant distress. The researchers have experience of working with people who have experienced vulnerabilities and challenging life circumstances. All research team members possessed a current Enhanced Certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The working practices and confidentiality requirements of all participating agencies were fully respected throughout the evaluation. All data were treated as confidential and pseudonyms have been used for participants to maintain their anonymity. Audio recordings of interviews were held for transcribing purposes (with the permission of each participant) and are stored securely alongside all other hard copies of data, which were anonymised and linked to personal information through standard identification coding methods. Data will be held by the University of Wolverhampton for up to two years after which it will be destroyed. No data will be shared with the University's partners or third parties. The University and its employees are bound by its Data Protection Policy.

Only one ethical incident was reported. During one face to face interview, the participant experienced emotional distress - the researcher asked the participant if she was well enough to continue, if she would like to discontinue data collection or continue at an agreed future time. The participant replied that she was fine and would like to continue data collection and her wishes were respected.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data collected from the completed 14-item WEMWBSs were analysed following the process in *Using and Analysing WEMWBS to Measure the Impact of Interventions in Improving*

*Mental Wellbeing Workbook* (Coventry City Council and the University of Warwick, 2014). The completed scales were inputted and analysed in the *Measuring Well Being Excel template* (Version 2.0, 2014) and in accordance with *Project Design, Analysis and Presentation of WEMWBS Findings* (NHS Coventry and Warwick Medical School, 2014). Data collected using the self-evaluation form was entered into SPSS software and descriptive analysis conducted. The audiotapes were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2018) for data analysis and management. Data were analysed using deductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Clarke and Braun, 2013) and direct quotes used as examples of themes to maintain rigour and validity. To enhance rigour, transcripts were read by the project manager and a common coding scheme and thematic framework was agreed (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Findings are reported here in simple descriptive quantitative data and complimented with verbatim qualitative quotes.

## **4 Findings**

Pre-project and post-project scores were examined for evidence of improvement over the period of the pilot project using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). Additionally, self-completed evaluation forms and interviews were conducted with participants to ascertain their thoughts of their experiences of being on the project. Findings from these data collection tools are presented below in turn.

### **4.1 Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale**

Of the 8 WEMWBS questionnaires, six were completed, giving an overall response rate of 75%. 83.3% (five participants) completed all questions in the WEMWBS questionnaire and approximately 16.7% (one participant) answered 13 of 14 items. A total WEMWBS score for each respondent was calculated by summing their responses to the WEMWBS questions. The highest possible score is 70 and the lowest is 14. The distribution of the scores from the project is shown in Figure 1. The mean WEMWBS score before the project was 34.33 with a standard deviation (SD) of 11.17 while the mean score after the project was 51.50 with a SD of 8.71.

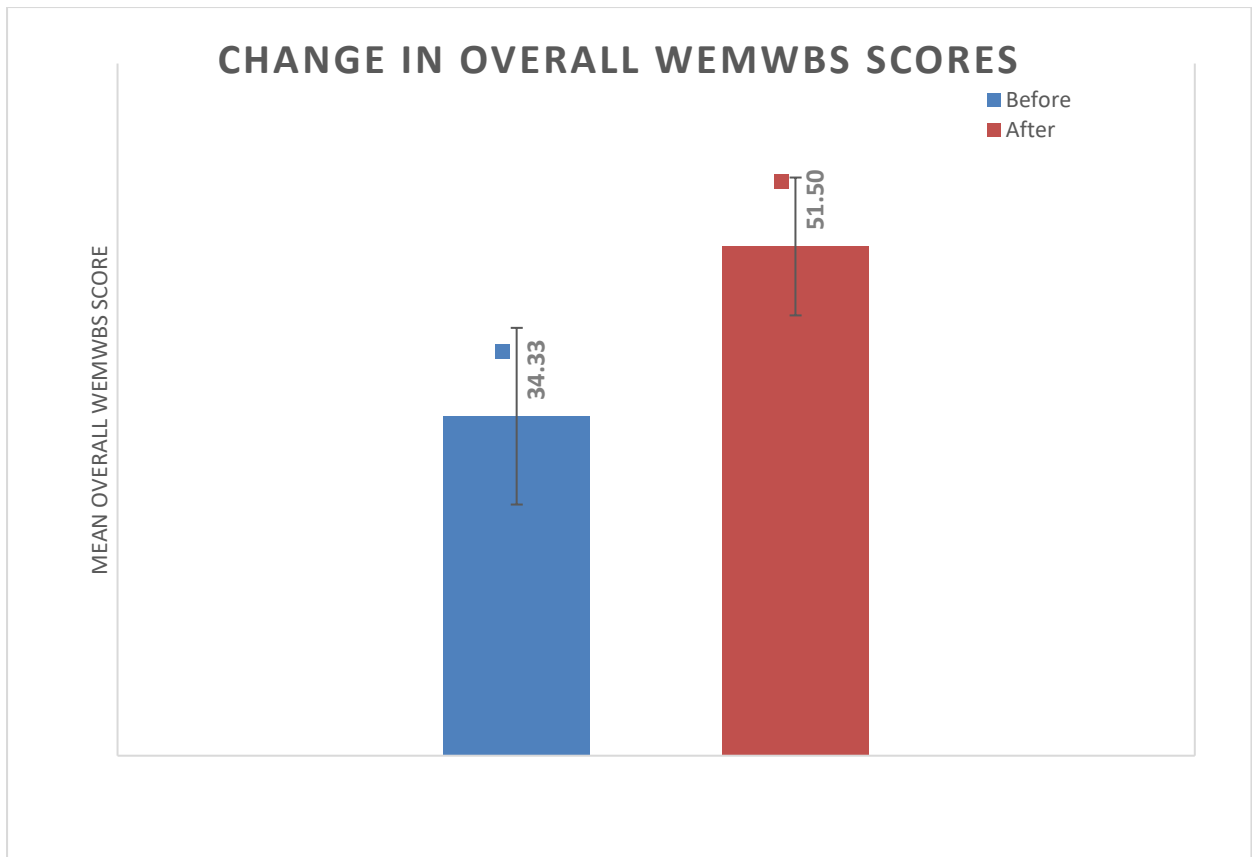


Fig 1: Change in the overall mental wellbeing of participants (n=6)

Overall, the mean WEMWBS score of 17.17 with a standard deviation of 10.6 was reported (see table 4.1), and this change is statistically significant at  $p = 0.05$ . Table 1 shows the change in scores from T1 (before the project) to T2 (after the project).

*Table 1: Changes in WEMWBS scores in the group of women from T1 to T2*

Change in WEMWBS Scores between intervention time points					
Time-points	Number of women	Change in Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value	Significant change?
Time2-Time1	6	WEMWBS total mean score changed from 34.3 at T1 to 51.50 at T2 = 17.17-point change in score	10.6	$P < .001$	A significant positive change was recorded regardless the small sample size

All participants recorded meaningful positive change in mental wellbeing after the project. Before The Phoenix Project, no proportion of the sample was recorded in the high wellbeing category and, also, none of the sample fell into the high mental wellbeing category after the project. Interestingly, before the project, a large proportion of the women were in the low mental wellbeing category (83%) and after the project, the same proportion of the sample

(83%) moved from low mental wellbeing into moderate mental wellbeing category with fewer women remaining in the low (17%) mental wellbeing category (see Figure 2).

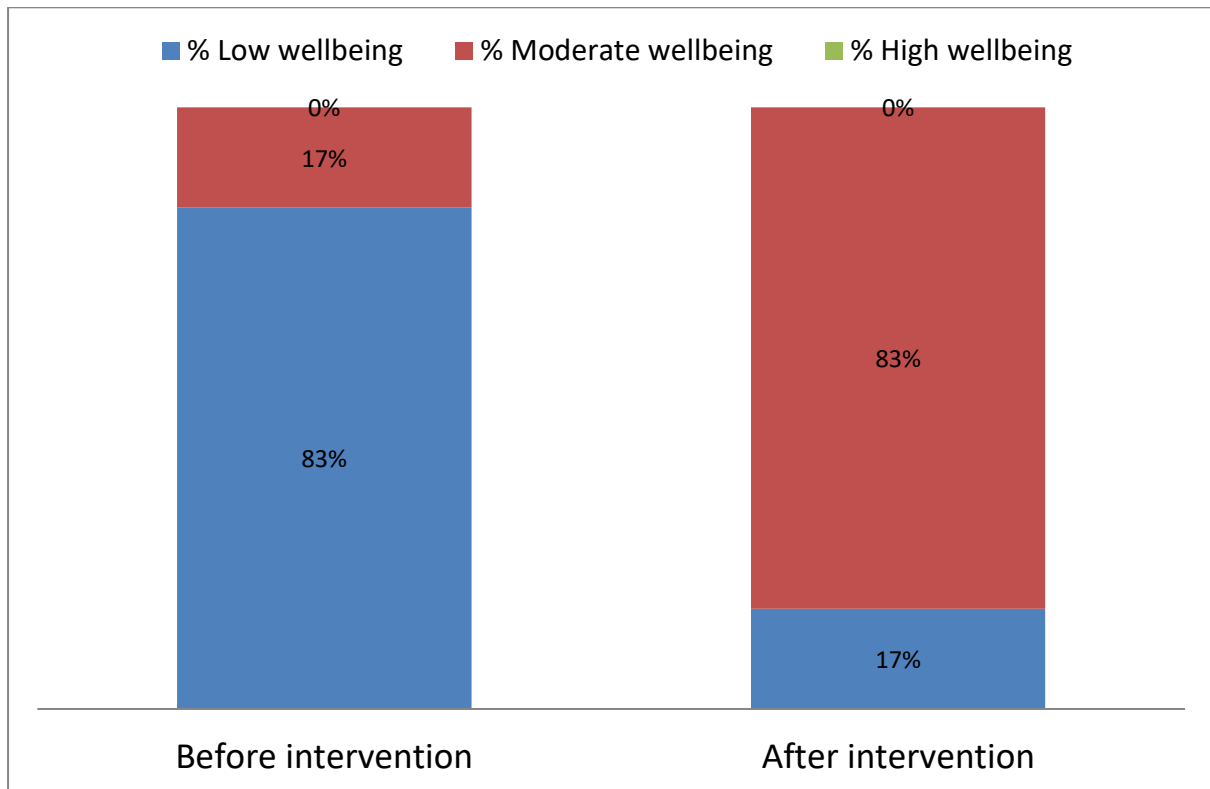


Figure 2: Before and after percentage of women at each level of mental wellbeing

Using the WEMWBS to evaluate The Phoenix Project showed:

1. Tangible evidence that The Phoenix Project was effective in improving the mental wellbeing of women who have experienced domestic abuse;
2. Significant reduction in low wellbeing (from 83% to 17%);
3. Significant increase in moderate wellbeing (from 17% to 83%);
4. That all participants had meaningful positive change in mental wellbeing; and
5. That improvement in wellbeing may be either due to the use of drama activities which was memorable for participants or the way Geese Theatre Company staff interacted with the participants.

#### 4.2 Self-completed project evaluation form

Table 2 reports the impact of the project on participants. A total of eight questionnaires were completed and returned for analysis, giving a response rate of 100%. All the women who took part in the evaluation reported that they enjoyed the project (100%, n=8), the use of theatre and drama made the project more memorable (100%, n=8) and they would recommend the project to someone else (100%, n=8). 87.5% (n=7) of the women think that the greatest impact of The Phoenix Project was encouraging participants to make changes in their life.

75% (n=6) of the women believed they have learnt new skills which they can use, while 62.5% (n=5) believed that the project increased their confidence and ability to get on with people. In the last 12 months, only 25% of the women had visited a theatre. 37.5% had ever been to the Grand Theatre as an adult, had ever been involved in an art project and had ever been in a theatre/drama project before. All the women were interested in participating in a similar project in the future and 87.5% reported that the project has encouraged them to engage more in art related activities.

*Table 2: Results from the self-evaluation form*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>I have more confidence</b>		
Neither agree nor disagree	3	37.5
Agree	5	62.5
<b>I am better at getting on with people</b>		
Neither agree nor disagree	3	37.5
Agree	5	62.5
<b>I have learnt new skills which I can use</b>		
Disagree	1	12.5
Neither agree nor disagree	1	12.5
Agree	6	75.0
<b>I want to make changes in my life</b>		
Neither agree nor disagree	1	12.5
Agree	7	87.5
<b>I enjoyed the project</b>		
Strongly agree	8	100.0
<b>Using theatre and drama made the project more memorable</b>		
Agree	8	100.0
<b>I would recommend the project to someone else</b>		
Agree	8	100.0
<b>Have visited a Theatre</b>		
In the last 12 months	2	25.0
In the last 5-10 year	3	37.5
Over 10 years ago	3	37.5
<b>Have you ever been to the Grand Theatre as an adult</b>		
Yes	3	37.5
No	5	62.5
<b>Have ever been involved in a Theatre/drama project before</b>		
Yes	3	37.5
No	6	62.5
<b>Would be interested in participating in a similar project in the future</b>		
Yes	8	100.0
<b>This experience encouraged you to engage more in art related activities</b>		
Yes	7	87.5
No	1	12.5
<b>Have ever been involved in an art project before</b>		
Yes	3	37.5
No	5	62.5

#### 4.2.1 Results from general qualitative comments

All eight participants provided brief general comments. Feedback about the elements of the project that were most useful and memorable suggested the use of theatre, drama, and ice breakers. Taking part in the drama and watching others portray characters helped participants to reflect and understand their own experiences better by changing their views about their behaviour and helping them see things from a different perspective. Participants enjoyed the games and ice breakers as this helped them to connect as a group, achieve self-realisation, and improved their ability to work in a group. For example, one participant wrote:

*“I found using the token<sup>5</sup> most useful because I learnt about myself. The ice-breakers were memorable and fun. I have learned a lot about my own personal journey. The acting was powerful”* (Participant 01).

Another participant stated that she enjoyed the:

*“...[r]ole play, team work, sharing others’ experience and having confidence to take part in group work and discussion”* (Participant 03).

Participants also found the acting of ‘strong confident female characters’ and hearing others talk about their experiences very memorable and useful as it helped them to feel free to express themselves, take part in the project activities and respect their self as well as others in the group:

*“Using the theatre and drama as the project which was memorable for me. Also having [named Geese Theatre Company staff] directing this strong confident woman has made a difference. I was allowed to express, perform and respect all the things said by me and the others within the group too. The performance from all the women. We gelled together”* (Participant 07).

*“Choosing the two cards<sup>6</sup> that represented the barrier and goals and hearing the other ladies talk about it was useful”* (Participant 08).

Other responses suggested that participants felt that the project has helped them to manage their anxiety by making them feel at ease and calm about their past experiences and, most importantly, improved their confidence, ability to take control of their situations and remove the feeling of isolation as they realised others have similar experiences. For instance, one participant commented:

*“This project made me feel relaxed, listened and I talked. That made me feel released”* (Participant 02).

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<sup>5</sup> The token is an activity in which cards or pictures showing different emotions or themes are used for communication.

<sup>6</sup> Represent cards depicting images of various emotions, situations in life, goals and barriers. Example is the image of a ‘wall’ as a barrier from moving forward.



Another participant wrote that:

*“It (The Phoenix Project) helped me to reflect on myself and what I need to do to move forward. I don’t feel so alone as now I know people who have shared in my experiences”* (Participant 06).

Furthermore, all participants felt that the way Geese Theatre Company staffs interacted with them during the project provided them with emotional support. The provision of one-to-one support, non-judgmental personal and group advice and having the patience to listen to participants’ individual concerns was valuable and this helped them to cope with situations:

*“I am glad that they supported us and was able to talk privately and in the group without judgment toward anyone”* (Participant 07).

Others:

*“Oh, breath-taking, refreshing. It was very shaky, and XYZ<sup>7</sup> (Named two Geese Theatre Company staff and one participant) had hold my hand through the shaking moments...They interacted well with me, offering support and advice”* (Participant 05).

*“Absolutely amazing! Down to earth, approachable and non-judgemental”* (Participant 1).

Masks were commonly used in the project to portray characters who hide their identity or feelings. Although most of the participants were happy with all aspect of the project, one woman raised concerns around the use of mask and paper work:

*“Can I say not liking the mask performance, but I don’t; all the paper work”* (Participant 7).

Finally, the continuity of the project was recommended by all those who took part. Participants felt that the project should continue not only in Wolverhampton but should be extended to other places and its aim expanded to incorporate helping with employability:

*“I hope this project can continue as I feel this project has given me a sense of belonging, strength to take part and express myself to others whether it be through voice, drama acting and role play”* (Participant 03).

Other participants stated that:

*“This was a great project that I believe is needed not only in Wolverhampton but everywhere”* (Participant 04).

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<sup>7</sup> XYZ represents names of Geese staffs and one participant

*“I would like to see sessions on self-worth and how to improve it. Also, on regulations, whether it be in job situations, applying for something or in getting a raise or to handle rejection. So, they know it’s not them being rejected but the situation, etc” (Participant 08).*

### 4.3 Interviews

The key findings of the qualitative inquiry are presented below. The interviews generated five main themes: communication and listening skills; team-work, sharing ideas and solving problems; self-confidence, self-esteem and personal achievement; ability to bring knowledge and options to the process; and mental wellbeing. A range of potential benefits associated with the project was identified by respondents. These were generally conceptualised in terms of improving the individual's wellbeing. The primarily perceived benefits of the project were that it removed the feeling of isolation, especially for those who do not have support from friends and family and gave participants back some control over their life by empowering them to take active steps to reducing fear and anxiety. The project also provided participants with greater confidence to begin new relationships and socialise with other people.

#### 4.3.1 Communication and listening skills

The analysis showed that the ability to communicate is generally viewed by the interviewees as one benefit of The Phoenix Project, with the exception of one woman who stated that the project did not change her in this area as she is in college and has good communication skills. The responses from others reported that the project created a friendly atmosphere where participants were encouraged and supported to communicate in their own way, and this made them feel positive to talk about experiences and hence able to communicate with others. For instance, regarding improving participants' communication skills, comments such as these were made:

*“Am an expressive woman, erm so I believed that everyone go through life for a reason and I also believe that everybody has got a goal and a purpose. And I had a way of communicating my believe to others in the group and I communicated that by portraying a butterfly ‘I think you saw it the last day’ (referring to the researcher). Like during the six day we had a chance to go through it and to.... yeah. It was amazing because when I was living in the hostel that’s when I had the idea, and then to having to say the idea and then to do it, it’s like uh! Somebody believed in me. It comes out first very ermm .... I felt really positive in myself yeah” (Angelica).*

*“Because it was relatable, and we had to really think about it and because of thinking about it when one person had said something .... erm another person could relate. Sometimes it would trigger off memories and some people would get upset but then everybody was there like to comfort them and some of us would just like talk about it and then say yeah, we could relate. So, that really helped like open up the communication for us and that really helped for myself personally to feel that I could communicate with people because in general I would probably be perceived as a shy person yeah” (Sarah).*

*“Erm yes, I definitely highlight to myself places in my life where I need help and from there I have been able to go forward and communicated that need to others”*  
(Georgina).

Additionally, it was acknowledged that The Phoenix Project improved participants’ listening skills and ability to follow instructions by engaging in goal achieving activities. All the participants felt that they learnt how to listen to one another, shared and communicated ideas effectively and, most importantly, follow instructions from the project lead in order to achieve targeted goals. This is demonstrated in the following comments:

*“.... we kind of came up with a strategy to stop shouting at each other ‘move, change chairs’ so everyone was rushing around while everyone was trying to listen to each other it wasn’t working. We, we was down by 30 seconds yeah. So then we found a strategy of what to do and with her help (Geese Theatre Company staff), she had to explain certain things to us ‘you know if you want me not to go to the farthest chair, you got to make sure that all of you are in the chairs nearer to me and make sure that when I get to the farthest chair, you, some move it and I have to go back the other way’. So, we did it according to her direction and then our strategy we end up talking to each other on what to do and we figured it out and we was ready and one and half minute so that wasn’t too bad yeah”* (Anna).

*“I just feel like it helps communicates because it like helps me to think more and to listen more to other people”* (Sarah).

*“I will say being able to listen to others because we were playing this one game, everyone was like supposed to sit on a chair, and the lady that was doing the acting, she was supposed to walk past us basically from one end of the room to the other end of the room to get in the empty chair and everyone was like moving around, shuffling around and like screaming names and running around and then boom before you know it she is sitting on the chair and she wasn’t supposed to sit in the chair. We were supposed to stop her from getting on the chair. Because no one was listening, no one was like doing what they are supposed to do until..... We stopped and say look alright ...there is this one girl on the course, she is a good communicator, so she stopped us and say, ‘look I will tell you what to do’, we listened to her and we kind of instinctively move from there and in the end we have achieved the goal yaa!”* (Angelica).

#### 4.3.2 Team-work, sharing ideas and solving problems

The interviewees all expressed the view that the project enhanced their ability to work as part of a team by engaging in group or paired drama activities:

*“So, it got me thinking ‘not about me but more to do with as a team work.....one of the activities was we had all sat down on some chairs and one of the chairs was furthers away from us, and we had to stop the lady who is leading the whole team from going to that chair. She works slower, and we are to speed up and quickly make*

*an effort not to get her into that chair. So, it was strategy, team work, effort and a lot of shouting” (Anna).*

*“So, I think that really helped me like the team player kind of thing. Yeah when we was doing some of the drama .... because a lot of the activities we were even doing it like in pairs or in groups. Erm..... so that really helped with interacting with other people because we had to discuss and decide what role we would like to play like when we was during the drama and then different scene, like what we thought should go into the scenes, like how that person that we acting is feeling yeah” (Sarah).*

In addition to team work, problem solving skills was another factor all participants felt they have gained from attending the project. This was drawn from elaborations given by all the interviewees on the character ‘Ann’ which was created by the project participants themselves in a drama-based activity. This activity helped participants to reflect positively on how to deal with problems by seeking help when needed. The drama created an opportunity for participants to share ideas and explore the services available in the community and, by so doing, participants are aware of where and how to seek help when the need arises. This is demonstrated in the following quotations:

*“.....with the character Ann<sup>8</sup> that we have created, we had ermm basically.... I played Ann, and Ann was the woman that was gonna commit suicide because she had lots of problems. One of the problems was been ermm debt like stuffs like that so, the part that we played as in getting help, we went to the citizen advice borough. So, it was just like very spiritual I would say to be honest. So, it was like no one can make physical change when they need help and know what to do, just go out and get help” (Angelica).*

*“The leader did a performance of somebody in a depressive state and we had to end up doing our performance based on what we think that person can arrive to the answers and solutions to their problem. And the person we invent, we would have performed..... was invented by us as a group actually. So, we invented this person and looked at the bad side of their lives .... the worst side and then as we went from that erm idea of it, we had to create a scenario of her to get out of those situations yeah. So, when we did that, it helped me in the imaginary world that I can also think of this situation that am going through or whatever is happening in my personal life in a total different way. And I can seek help and I can choose not to seek help, but I can also deal with it in a way that it’s going to help me, beneficial with other people, and how I move on or get pass the barrier that is stopping me from going any further and that’s what came out of the whole event... the project yeah” (Anna).*

*“I think it has helped me to solve problems because we looked a lot at what we could do for the character in that situation because really those exercises were all like internal reflection. Ermm you know we do an exercise it will kind of be on surface level .... would say how you feel and then you know, you would go away at the end of*

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<sup>8</sup> The name of a character invented by participants in a drama-based activity

*the day and you would realise ok I have been speaking about myself here. Erm so yes, I think it definitely highlighted to me where some of my problems are that has made me do something about them” (Georgina).*

Two of the participants also expressed the notion that the project has influenced the way they deal with challenges. By providing opportunities for participants to share personal experiences, talk about their problems and offer possible suggestions to one another, the project impacted positively on the women’s ability to resolve family issues amicably. This was drawn from a narrative of a child care issue and from a family relationship issue:

*“What happens is that, that person explains their situation, they are in tears, they are hurtful, they are feeling anxiety, they don’t know how to deal with this situation and all of a sudden you gave them the answer but then at the same time your situation becomes deleted so when you go home you don’t feel that way toward your child. You look at your child and ‘I know someone who is going through the same thing. I just explained to them what to do! I know what to do with you’ and now you have dealt with it. Because what happens is that the emotional feeling of your situations has now been deleted or diminished because of somebody else’s situation that overrides yours but allows you to now properly think and calculate how to deal with that situation more better than what you expected yeah” (Anna).*

*“After the project the change is basically, it makes me see thing differently, I have just accepted it that this is what it is, I don’t want to be afraid you know yeah. I understand the concept of somebody hiding and somebody being real and somebody masking their identity or something like that yeah. After this course, I wrote my mum a letter in my journal and I have just literary put in the letter what I would like to tell her” (Angelica).*

In addition to the above-mentioned benefit, another factor which emerged as impacting on participant was *engaging in social activities*. As previously mentioned, The Phoenix Project involved the use of drama-based activities to promote personal development and change. By engaging in drama activities as a group, participants were able to develop friendly relationship among themselves and with staff as well, and were able to transfer this to the outside world. The project impacts on participants’ social lives by encouraging them to build friendly relationships with one another, to try new things and, as such, learn to trust others and be able to take part in social activities. When interviewees were asked if the project has impacted on their ability to engage in other social activities comments like this were made:

*“It’s really funny because when you ask that question am thinking that if I was in the pub and they said let’s do a quiz right, would I take part? Yeah, I think so....” (Anna).*

*“I would say erm sometimes I feel a bit socially awkward or I get social anxiety, I mean I have more male friends than female friends like I very rarely have female friends am talking to constantly. It was actually quite nice for me personally for a change to actually be surrounded by women that am not used to, that was lovely” (Georgina).*

*“Yeah, I do definitely because I would have been hesitant before to do anything but now I think twice and then obviously I weigh it up and look at everything and it’s like what have I got to lose, you can only try so, yeah I feel it’s really helped in that by doing it (The Phoenix Project) I feel like better in myself and I feel like really assertive” (Sarah).*

Taking part in social activities through engaging in drama activities as a group and in pairs also helped the women to trust again and inspired them to start up new relationships as one interviewee admitted:

*“...am just a very socially awkward person. Before the project, I had only just started dating and then this side of the project (after the project), am actually putting myself out there more to find dates and then try and meet someone so in terms of that I don’t know if that’s a reflection of the project yeah” (Georgina).*

#### 4.3.3 Self-confidence, self-esteem and personal achievement

Similar to the findings from the self-completed project evaluation form, increase in self-confidence and self-esteem was another theme that ran through the interviews. The women believed that by attending the project, their level of confidence has increased. Interviewees also felt that by engaging in drama acting, getting positive feedbacks and hugs from the group, their self-confidence and self-esteem increased. However, some participants may not have realised this themselves, as one participant stated that she has not noticed a change in her level of confidence after the project, although her family and friends were able to spot the change in confidence as one interviewee mentioned that she has been told by her tutor that she is now more confident and engaging more in academic work since attaining the project. Interviewees were asked if their confidence and self-esteem has changed since taking part in the project, and they responded by making the following comments:

*“..... the only thing in lesson is that my tutors are now saying that I have got more self-esteem, they also said that I engage more with a lot more people. After the project I have moved farther out of field of just clicking with two people, am now talking to everybody in the class yeah. So, erm the teacher was saying it yesterday, it was really weird....it was so funny. She even got me to filling a form and then she wrote her bit and said “that you are very engaging, you socialise a lot more now”. I don’t know what happened but she said “you are now going around the whole class room talking to everybody”....she was like she thought I was down one end which I normally sit down, she said “oh all of a sudden you are in the middle of the classroom and now you are at the back of the classroom and you are talking to everybody”. So, she said you are the only person who has done that so far and I was like oh I didn’t notice....” (Anna).*

*“Yeah because I believe in myself, I believe that I can be myself. I believe that the way I think and the way I am is good enough yeah.... I received lots of hug on the course, and erm people talked to me so, I understand that my self-esteem, it comes from just*

*understanding what am going through and stuffs like that and so I can help other people” (Angelica).*

*“I feel more confident in how I need to move forward yes. Because I feel supported, feel erm like by the end of that project; we were like one big family. It was just, it was lovely” (Georgina).*

*“Yeah, my confidence was erm really, really low completely before and then but since like doing the project ...even after a week I could notice like a different sort of change in my confidence. Erm it’s like it just helped up lift me that kind of thing. Erm like when we was doing like different activities like thinking about things like I can do things.....like it’s me that is thinking on my confidence but when we actually looked at the bigger picture, you see well I have done this, I have got this and am being grateful, everything like all together. Then is like well why should I not be.... have no confidence. Well the drama helped because erm because I don’t really get to like ...obviously I don’t perform in front of people so that was a bit of a challenge but that helped to bring out my confidence and then once I did like the scene and get back the feedback and obviously the praise of everyone that like helped uplift me and then and so with other activities, that was like that feeling was still there and then when I thought like that and others I would praise them as well and it was like it helped me feel good because I have been praised and am praising others and it makes me feel good like both ways” .....my self-esteem was quite low as well. Am not saying is all up there now but has improved quite... quite a lot since been at the project (Sarah).*

After taking part in The Phoenix Project, one participant felt that the project has impacted in her ability to seek employment by applying for an apprentice program. She felt this was a personal achievement which before the project she has struggled to achieve:

*“Yeah, it has made me. So, I wanted to do like an apprentice course yeah. So my confidence in finding a job is just ...was really low because I have been affected by work a lot where by I have been dismissed and all of these different stuffs so my confidence was really low but doing The Phoenix Project, it has helped me to see that I can go for what I want which is what I am doing now so yeah” (Angelica).*

#### 4.3.4 Ability to contribute knowledge and options to the process

The project provided an avenue where participants receive feedback from others about their strengths and areas where they can improve. This activity gave participants more knowledge and options for life in regard to their creative ability and areas where they might be interested in pursuing as a career:

*“.... It’s made me aware that I want to do lots of acting, and drama and videoing and showing my talent and being able to like make up ideas and portray across to help like a woman that has been in domestic abuse erm ....domestic violence and also to know that there is no limit to doing stuff like that and it doesn’t matter as well where I have come from. It’s just believed in myself.... I am thankful the project was there but for me I think what makes it more useful is that I am willing, and I am able and I*

*understand that you have to go through struggles in life to get what you want” (Angelica).*

*“...the leader gave us a task to do yeah. And without going into the task but more to go into what came out of it. What came out of the task was that we had to say a certain thing about the person and also give them enlightenment of something they don’t know for themselves and that should carry them on to do whatever they want to do and ..... and ermm mines was to be more open to give my creativeness to the world, allow the world to see the creativeness of me and ...ermm that was very inspiring for me because I didn’t think of myself in that way, that I was very creative. I didn’t see myself ....ermm how can I put it? Ermm I saw myself as being me, doing me yeah but I never saw how people saw me doing me. So, when they saw something that I didn’t see valued in me it made think wow! (Anna)*

#### 4.3.5 Mental wellbeing

On the whole, a clear and important theme that ran through the interviews was that The Phoenix Project improved the mental wellbeing of participants. This underscores the significant influence of the project and the relevance of this evaluation given its focus on contributing to the health and wellbeing of those who took part in the project. In this regard, the one to one support and constant checking on participants’ emotional state during and after each session helped the women change the way they think and feel about themselves. It also made them realise that they are loved and cared for. Participants also acknowledged that acting the character Ann helped them to see how others feel as a result of their actions or decisions. This is demonstrated in the following comments:

*“I use to have big suicidal thoughts and yeah to the point... where I wanted to do like ..... there have been cases of strangling myself and putting stuffs around my neck and stuffs like that and over dosing and things like that but on the course, unknowingly, I get to act or play a suicidal person, but for me to act and be the suicidal person, and then somebody coming just in time to safe me from going into that it break .....it break something. I don’t know if that makes sense. And when I wake up in the morning and am thinking because what will trigger the suicidal thoughts is if am being rejected or ignored or if I feel like am no use, am dumb or am not getting loved or am not experiencing what I should I will say ‘oh I might as well go and kill myself’. But recently, like if I wake up and if am trying to think am goanna kill myself, the thought doesn’t come honestly after The Phoenix Project yeah” (Angelica).*

*“It (The Phoenix Project) has helped me to deal with the situation in more delicate way than I thought I was going to deal with it. It made me set back as well not being irrational in the way I was going to deal with it and not to be so judgmental on myself or anybody else concerned or anybody dealing with the situation. That’s what it made me do, it made me set back and see things differently” (Anna).*



*“..... just like being able to talk especially that exercise<sup>9</sup> that I said too at the beginning of the day, because it was also done at the end of the day as well so that was quite good because you can feel like the warm and the comfort and the support. And they do care, and they do listen, and they do you know like relate and something like that, that really helped just to know. At the beginning you say how you feel and at the end, and then it’s not just at the end because all the way through they are making sure that we are okay and stuff like that so, that meant a lot yeah. Yeah, I looked at things a lot differently in a different light like because then.... ‘am thinking how to word it’. The way I thought before like my self-esteem and my confident and all that was low. Even sometimes like concentration you know, would be over my head just a little bit but after the project, it helped me to kind of feel like in control of my life, to realise that it’s me that is in control, you know that I can do things, achieve and that its only me that’s gonna make things happen for myself and also I would say it’s also helped as well because I suffer with anxiety and depression, I have noticed that my anxiety was low, was really low obviously throughout it.....” (Sarah).*

Interestingly, two interviewees compared The Phoenix Project with therapy. They felt The Phoenix Project was more impacting than talking to a therapist about their problem:

*“It’s like because am going through like a mental health problem at the moment, issues and all of that. And am getting help for it and the help am getting is just to talk to somebody and go over the problem and go over the problem and over the problem and over the problem but there is no like definite solution to the problem and I was explaining to one of the people on the course there, they don’t understand, this people that we are going to.... Not that it is not helpful; I am grateful for it but I ..... with this course (The Phoenix Project), I think it touches on... it goes deep, it literary bring peace to your heart” (Angelica).*

*“I think it’s (The Phoenix Project) very beneficial, it’s not like therapy in term...it goes to the deep-rooted trauma and it’s not the going over of the event of what’s happened to you, it’s the helping you with the now, focus on the now, what can you do now to help. And I think a lot of the women found that helpful as well. That it wasn’t about just talking about it, you didn’t have to say anything about what you have been through at all and yeah, we were able to talk about what problems we were going through now” (Georgina).*

The Phoenix Project impacted on those who took part in it by improving their mental wellbeing. This was achieved by increasing their level of confidence and communication skills through theatre performance and art. The women who took part in the project felt loved and confident in themselves and this can be seen in Figure 1: illustrating the most frequently used words by interviewees.

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<sup>9</sup> An exercise where participants are asked to rate how they feel.



Figure 3: Illustrating frequently used words in the interviews

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

By creating an atmosphere of belonging and sharing, The Phoenix Project helped participants to be able to communicate their personal experiences to others and to talk about their situations. The use of positive feedbacks and non-judgmental comments help participants to feel at home and to attain self-realisation. Hearing others talk about similar situations and life experiences helped participants to feel confident in dealing with their own problems and seeking help where needed. The realisation that The Phoenix Project was not about just talking about what they have been through to an expert like therapy but more about sharing as little as they want to a group of women in similar circumstance helped participants to realise that they are not alone and this made all the women more able to communicate and feel comfortable with the activities within the project. In the project, participants were in control of how much they want to reveal by way of creating or inventing characters. To add to this, the findings from The Phoenix Project support Chapman and Hough's (1998) theories that learning should be active, concrete and based on the use of role play to model and practice new skills as well as Baim, Brookes and Mountford's (2002) suggestion that arts practiced using a range of exercises, games, role play, and drama promotes personal development and change.

### 5.1 Conclusion

Although this was a short-term small-scale study, the findings of this evaluation have demonstrated that The Phoenix Project was associated with significant improvements in mental wellbeing in terms of increasing participants' self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of belonging, personal achievement, and listening and communication skills, working as a team and sharing ideas, solving problems, contributing knowledge and options to the process by

the end of the pilot project. Although no scores were recorded for high wellbeing, a significant proportion of participants maintained moderate mental wellbeing in the short-term. With the exception of one woman who expressed a negative attitude toward the use of masks in the project, none of the women in the study expressed overtly negative views. Interviews conducted with some of the participants highlighted the positive impacts of the project on them. In particular, they felt their confidence has improved and felt able to move on with their life. As all the women had experienced domestic violence which is known to affect the mental wellbeing of victims, the fact that they all talked about having more confidence, self-esteem and improved mental wellbeing suggests the success of the project.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Participants in the pilot of The Phoenix Project all expressed a desire for the project to continue and be extended to two weeks. As this was a pilot study, and as Geese Theatre Company delivered the programme for a short period of six days, it was not possible to conduct a long-term follow-up study on the impact on project participants. Future research might explore the long-term impact of The Phoenix Project on participants to measure changes in wellbeing over time.

The small sample size is one of the biggest limitations in this study as there were very few participants to be assessed. Additional research and evaluation is needed using a large sample size to better understand the impact of the project on participants. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, it was not possible for the evaluation team to gain access to the participants during the project. Participants' demographic data were not collected for this evaluation therefore further research is needed to assess the impact of the project by participants' demographic characteristic.

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[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44350/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44350/9789241564007_eng.pdf?sequence=1) [Accessed 15 May 2018].

## Appendix I Participant Information Sheet



### AN EVALUATION OF THE PHOENIX PROJECT

#### PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

On behalf of The Grand Theatre Wolverhampton (in partnership with Geese Theatre Company and The Haven Wolverhampton), the University of Wolverhampton has been asked to evaluate The Phoenix Project.

Due to your involvement in The Phoenix Project, we would like to invite you to take part in the evaluation by telling us about your knowledge, understanding and experiences of the project. This Participant Information Sheet is designed to answer some questions you may have about the study.

My name is Ngozika Jane Hemuka, Research Assistant for the evaluation. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important that you understand why the evaluation is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and family members if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear, and I will do my best to answer your questions.

#### **Why is the evaluation needed?**

The evaluation is needed to assess whether The Phoenix Project has been successful, and to provide evidence of its success.

#### **Why have I been asked to take part?**

You have been invited to take part because you are taking part in The Phoenix Project. We are asking all women on the project if they would like to take part.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you whether you decide to take part or not. If you decide to take part in the evaluation you will be given this information sheet to read and keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. It is important you know that you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

#### **What will I have to do if I agree to take part?**

If you agree to take part in the evaluation, we would like you to take part in a one-to-one interview at the end of the project. We will arrange a time to meet face-to-face which is convenient for you. The interview is expected to last up to 30 minutes. If you prefer, the interview could be conducted by telephone at a date and time that will be convenient for you. If this happens, we will ring you, so there will be no charge to you for this call.

**Can I stop the interview if I want?**

Yes. It is important you know that you can stop the interview or withdraw from the evaluation at any time without giving a reason.

We would like to digitally record the interview as a way to capture all data. You will be shown how to stop the recording before the interview begins, so you have control over what is recorded. The recording will be deleted once the interview has been transcribed.

**Will my participation in the evaluation remain confidential?**

Your real name will not be recorded on any documents that are prepared in the process of, and as a result of, the evaluation. We will use a different name, one of your choosing if you would like. Your real name will not be disclosed to any other parties. All digital documents will have a unique password and be stored on a password-protected computer, which will only be available to the researcher who has requested this information in order to set up the interview and also the researcher who will conduct the interview. The written report will refer only to participants' aliases and/or a unique reference number.

**What happens when the evaluation stops?**

At the end of the evaluation, all information collected will be processed and stored securely using password protected systems for two years. No personal or identifiable data will be stored. All procedures involved in the survey are compliant with the UK Data Protection Act 1998.

**What are the advantages of taking part?**

There is no payment or other direct benefit for taking part in the evaluation. You may find it helpful to discuss your experiences and opinions with someone who is genuinely interested to hear your views. Findings from the evaluation will provide evidence of the project's success and how effective it has been for you and other women on the project. For this reason, you may feel you are helping to improve the support to women and children in Wolverhampton.

**Are there any disadvantages of taking part?**

All research and evaluation studies carry some element of risk to their participants. For this evaluation, it is possible you may experience emotional unrest during interview. It could be that you are not comfortable talking about confidential or otherwise sensitive information. Please be reassured that we are very aware of this and if you decide, for any reason, that you wish to stop the interview, you are free to do so without having to give a reason. You are free to change your mind at any point.

**What happens to the results of the evaluation?**

The information from all the interviews will be analysed, and a written report submitted to The Grand Theatre Wolverhampton. Data will be held by the University for up to two years after which it will be destroyed. Identities of volunteers will not be revealed in the report. If you wish to be provided with a summary of the evaluation results, please indicate by ticking the appropriate box on the consent form.

**What do I do if I have any concerns or questions about the evaluation?**



If you have any concerns or questions about this evaluation, you should ask to speak to the evaluation team. Should you experience any distress or become upset upon participating in the evaluation, The Haven Wolverhampton is available for support.

**What happens now?**

If you decide to take part in an interview, we will contact you to arrange a date, time and venue that are convenient to you to confirm when the interview can take place.

**Further information and contact details**

If you have any further questions or wish to talk about the evaluation in more detail, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Name: Dr Morgan Angela (Project Manager)  
Email: [Angela-Morgan@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:Angela-Morgan@wlv.ac.uk)  
Tel: 01902 322455

Name: Ngozika Jane Hemuka (Research Assistant)  
Email: [n.j.hemuka@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:n.j.hemuka@wlv.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to read this research information sheet**

## Appendix II Informed Consent Form



### EVALUATION OF THE PHOENIX PROJECT- INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1	The evaluation of the project will involve me taking part in an interview about my experiences, opinions and feelings of my involvement in The Phoenix Project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I have read/have had the Participant Information Sheet dated February 2018 read to me, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	My participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and that I will not be disadvantaged in any way for withdrawing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to my identification will be disclosed, either in any written reports or to any third parties.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	The use of sharing and saving the data in research and publications has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I agree to the evaluation team and the University of Wolverhampton recording and processing the information I provide. I understand that the information I provide will be used only for the purpose(s) as set out in the Participant Information Sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	I voluntarily agree to participate in an interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I would like to be provided with a summary of the evaluation results	Yes/No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant  
(Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent  
(Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix III Interview Schedule



### Interview Schedule: An Evaluation of The Phoenix Project

Date of interview	.....
Venue of interview	.....
(in person or telephone)	
Age of participant	.....
Participant's occupation	.....
Ethnicity	.....
Pseudonym for participant	.....

My Name is Jane Hemuka and I'm the Research Assistant working on the evaluation of The Phoenix Project. Thank you for taking part in this interview. Can you just confirm for me that you have read the Information Sheet and signed the Consent Form? During the interview, we'll be talking about your experiences on the pilot of The Phoenix Project and the impact the project has on you. Shall we begin?

The first few questions will give me a little background.

1. First of all, can you tell me why you joined the project?

2. What were your expectations of the project?

An Evaluation of The Phoenix Project

a. Were your expectations met?

Yes  No  Unsure

(We'll explore this more during the interview)

3. Please tell me more about the drama activities you were involved in.

4. Did you freely take part in the drama exercises or were you a little hesitant? Why?

Now I'd like to explore some particular aspects of the project and their influence on you.

5. Do you think the project has influenced the way you **communicate** with other people?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

6. Do you think the project has influenced your ability to **work with other people** as a team?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

7. Has your **confidence** changed since taking part in the project?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

8. Has your **self-esteem** changed since taking part in the project?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

9. Do you think the project has improved your ability to **take part in other social activities**?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

10. Do you think the project has improved your ability to **solve problems**?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

11. Do you feel you've gained any other personal achievements from working with this group?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

12. Has the project given you more **knowledge and options** for your life?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

13. In your opinion, do you think the project has had a positive effect on your mental wellbeing?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

14. Have you gained any other skills from the project?

Yes  No  Unsure

Why do you say this? (Ask for a good example)

We're coming to the end of the interview now, just a few more questions.

15. Would you recommend the project to other women in similar situation as yourself?

Yes  No  Unsure

An Evaluation of The Phoenix Project

Why do you say this?

16. What aspect of the project do you think was the best part? Why do you say this?

17. In your view, could the project be improved in any way?

Yes                                  No                                  Unsure           

Why do you say this?

18. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't talked about?

THIS IS THE END OF THE INTERVIEW- THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

## Appendix IV Self-completion project evaluation form

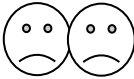



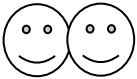


### P2: Evaluation Form

**Project:** The Phoenix Project

**Date:** March 2018

Thank you for taking part in this project, we hope you found it enjoyable. This form helps us assess how useful it has been. We would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below to show how much you agree or disagree with the statements and then answer the questions that follow. Please feel free to say what you think as your name is not on the form.

As a result of this project:	Strongly disagree 	Disagree 	Neither agree nor disagree 	Agree 	Strongly agree 
I have more confidence					
I am better at getting on with people					
I have learnt new skills which I can use					
I want to make changes in my life					
I enjoyed the project					
Using theatre and drama made the project more memorable					
I would recommend the project to someone else					

Which elements of the project did you find most useful / memorable?



An Evaluation of The Phoenix Project

Which elements did you find least useful / memorable?

What impact do you think the project might have on you?

How did you feel about the way Geese staff interacted with you?

Do you have any other comments?

Have you visited a theatre: *(please tick the appropriate box)*

In the last 12 months

In the last 2 – 3 years

In the last 5 – 10 years

Over 10 years ago

Never

An Evaluation of The Phoenix Project

Have you ever been to the Grand Theatre as an adult?	Yes / No
Have you ever been involved in a theatre / drama project before?	Yes / No
Would you be interested in participating in a similar project in the future?	Yes / No
Has this experience encouraged you to engage more in art related activities? E.g. visit an art gallery/museum/theatre	Yes / No
Have you ever been involved in an arts project before?	Yes / No

Thank you very much for your participation and for taking the time to give us your feedback. Occasionally, we use direct quotes from participants as part of our publicity material. If you would be happy for us to use your comments anonymously, please could you tick the box below.

## Appendix V 14-item Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts

Please tick (✓) the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

© WEMWBS

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved.

Appendix VI Phoenix Project Flyer

# The Phoenix Project

PRESENTED BY WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HAVEN WOLVERHAMPTON AND GEESE THEATRE COMPANY

Dates: 12th - 14th and 19th - 21st March 2018

Time: 10am-2pm each day

Venue: Central Wolverhampton

TBC

Cost: FREE

**Join our pilot of The Phoenix Project, accessing theatre-based sessions facilitated by female practitioners from The Geese Theatre Company.**

**In our safe environment, join six days of sessions to build self esteem, develop a sense personal achievement, experience being part of a team, sharing ideas and solving problems together.**

**Bring your own knowledge and opinions to the process and develop new skills through a theatre-based approach**

**All travel and childcare is covered, and food will be provided on the day.**

- Receive a certificate for taking part
- If you are happy to take part in an anonymous questionnaire and/or interview to help us gather information about the project, the opportunity will be available during the project, but it is not essential.

How many spaces are available?

8-10

How to get involved?

Speak to your Haven Support Worker or call The Haven's helpline on 08000 194 400

