SOUTH LONDON GALLERY ART BLOCK

IMPACT REPORT **2025–26**

By Ciara Sims for ImpactEd Group.

SLG

ImpactEd Evaluation

FOREWORD

Polly South, Communities & Learning Programme Manager

It has been a real pleasure to work with Ciara and the ImpactEd team on this thorough and insightful report to help us better understand, and articulate, the reach and impact of the SLG Art Block programme.

Working with an external partner who listened carefully and created space for reflection has been incredibly valuable. The evaluation process has helped us understand more clearly the difference Art Block is making to the children and young people who attend, what is working, and where there is still room to grow.

Working so closely on the programming and delivery of Art Block, it can sometimes be difficult to step back and put its impact into words. Week by week, we see the value of the programme in the trusted relationships built and nurtured with the young people who attend, and in the creativity, conversations and connections that grow within the space. These moments can feel small or everyday, but together they speak to the role that Art Block plays in the lives of young people, families and the wider community around it.

I'm incredibly grateful to our passionate, creative and skilled team; the community champions who advocate and work alongside us; the artists and teachers who collaborate and create with us; the parents and carers who put their trust in us; and, of course, the children and young people who shape the programme and choose to spend their time at Art Block.

Art Block is a pretty unique space, but the need for spaces like it is universal. I hope this report not only helps us, but also contributes to the wider case for sustained, accessible creative places where children and young people can make, experiment and connect with one another.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this evaluation and to Art Block more broadly, and especially to Bukhman Foundation for continuing their generous support, as well as The Mildred Fund, Southwark Council and Sceaux Gardens Tenants & Residents Association.

Bukhman Foundation

Sceaux Gardens Tenants & Residents Association

THE MILDRED FUND

Southwark Council

SLG



Art Block exterior, 2025. Photo: Charlotte Henry

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INTRODUCTION

About South London Gallery Art Block

South London Gallery Art Block (SLG Art Block) is a free creative space on Sceaux Gardens Estate for local children and young people (CYP) aged 6–16 to make, play, relax and spend time with others.

The programme is shaped by the interests and ideas of the young people who attend. Sessions include activities such as painting, drawing, slime-making, phone case customisation and cooking, as well as special projects led by artists exploring practices including screen printing, crochet, instrument-making, and eco-textiles. Art Block also has a separate cosy space where young people can relax and socialise.

Art Block is designed to be a safe, welcoming and inclusive space. The team is made up of experienced creative practitioners who receive regular training and are skilled in supporting young people with additional needs. South London Gallery staff are responsible for safeguarding the children and young people who take part.

About SLG Art Block attendees

SLG Art Block runs three after-school sessions each week for children and young people, split by age group: Wednesdays (ages 6-11), Thursdays (ages 13-16 - Your Space to Make), Fridays (ages 11-16). Additionally, there is one Saturday session per month for 6-11 year olds.

Since October 2024, 241 children and young people have attended SLG Art Block. SLG Art Block primarily reaches its local community: 87% of attendees live in Southwark and 71% in the Peckham constituency. Most attendees (84%) are from Global Majority backgrounds and 71% are eligible for free school meals. Engagement is often sustained, with 90% attending multiple times and a quarter of CYP attending more than 30 times.

About this evaluation

This year, SLG has partnered with ImpactEd to better understand the impact that SLG Art Block has on its stakeholders: children and young people, local parents/carers, and creative practitioners.

ImpactEd worked with the SLG Art Block team to create a *Theory of Change* (see appendix) from which the below research questions (RQs) were identified for the purposes of this evaluation, with the majority of questions concentrating on outcomes for CYP.

1. How does SLG Art Block support emotional and social wellbeing for participating CYP?
2. In what ways does participation in SLG Art Block support CYP to build on their confidence and aspirations for their future?
3. What opportunities does SLG Art Block create for CYP to learn about and practise artistic processes and materials?
4. In what ways does SLG Art Block reduce pressures on local families and contribute to parent/carer wellbeing?
5. How does participation in SLG Art Block support creative practitioners' professional development and access to career opportunities?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation draws on mixed methods of data from children and young people, creative practitioners, and parents/carers at SLG Art Block. The key findings are as follows:

1. SLG Art Block strongly supports children and young people's social wellbeing and development.

Friendship-building was the most consistent theme in the qualitative evidence, appearing across multiple different sources. Children and young people described making new friends, improving their social skills, and expanding their friendship groups. Parent/carer accounts describe an increased sense of community in the local area as a result of these friendships.

2. Trust in staff ran through nearly every data source.

Children and young people referenced staff support, parents/carers gave specific accounts of staff responding well to sensitive situations, and SLG Communities & Learning Assistants named safety and safeguarding above any other theme as the most important part of their role.

3. Children and young people's general wellbeing remained high across the two timepoints.

Where compared to a national benchmark, scores were notably higher than average, and children consistently reported high levels of enjoyment and happiness at SLG Art Block.

4. Children and young people show growing self-awareness, confidence, and resilience.

Across all age groups, children and young people demonstrated the ability to name and reflect on their emotions and skills, including a self-reported increase in confidence. This was corroborated by parent/carer accounts of seeing their children grow in confidence. Resilience was also a frequently coded theme, coming up in young people's description of creative activities where they learned new skills and had to try again when things went wrong.

5. Children and young people take real pride in the art they create at SLG Art Block, and the skills they develop.

There are accounts of children bringing their creations home and continuing to practise their skills at home.

6. For many parents and carers, SLG Art Block meaningfully eases time pressure and stress.

60% described SLG Art Block as having a positive impact on their time management, and 70% said it reduces stress.

7. Working at SLG Art Block has a strong positive effect on creative practitioners' professional development, with 100% of survey participants reporting a positive impact.

There is evidence to suggest that SLG Art Block also supports opportunities for local artists since the majority of respondents live in Southwark or in a neighbouring borough.

8. Demand often exceeds what SLG Art Block can provide.

Participation has increased by 139% since 2022-24 (+195% among those aged 11+), with children, young people and parents/carers reporting being turned away when sessions are full.

Recommendations

- The culture of trust, safety and belonging is a key strength of SLG Art Block and should be sustained as the programme develops. This was echoed by all stakeholders and underpins much of what works well, from friendship-building to inclusivity. It reflects the deliberate efforts of creative practitioners to create a welcoming and supportive environment.
- There is demand from both children and young people and their parents/carers to expand the provision that SLG Art Block provides. If funding allows, evidence from this report suggests that this would be well received by current SLG Art Block attendees. In particular, parents/carers requested more sessions for 6-11 year olds, and an increased number of Saturday sessions.
- Young people and artists expressed conflicting priorities for activities. Some children and young people wanted a greater variety of activities while visiting artists asked for more opportunities to explore their creative practices in greater depth. Balancing these needs will be an important consideration for future programme design.
- SLG Art Block may wish to consider planning for the transition for young people approaching 16 years old. Some expressed sadness and anxiety about aging out of the programme. If expanding the age range is not feasible, other alternatives like alumni offers may help to support this transition.
- Communities & Learning Assistants expressed the desire for a more consistent contracting and timetabling approach. SLG Art Block have since made some improvements to shift consistency to support both staff wellbeing and their ability to build ongoing relationships with young people.
- Artists asked for more opportunities for collaboration or repeat engagement, and for better photo documentation of their sessions.

METHODOLOGY

This evaluation uses a mixed methods approach to measure outcomes against the research questions. Quantitative surveys were conducted across all stakeholder groups, while qualitative data collection centred on creative and participatory methods with CYP, alongside focus groups with parents/carers.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data was gathered across three stakeholders listed below. Survey data from CYP was collected between two timepoints to assess consistency of findings using validated instruments to collect wellbeing data as well as a short custom survey. The parents/carers survey and the creative practitioners survey were designed as a single timepoint survey. Registration data from SLG Art Block's UpShot database was also used to understand the programme's reach.

Stakeholder	Survey instrument	Source	Number of responses
Children and young people	S-WEMWBS, plus a short custom survey	The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (2007)	Baseline: 31 Final: 18
	Adapted #BeeWell Symbol Survey, plus a short custom survey	Adapted from works by The University of Manchester, The Gregson Family Foundation and Anna Freud (2019)	Baseline: 34 Final: 17
Parents/carers	Custom survey relating to RQ4	N/A	20
Creative practitioners	Custom survey relating to RQ5	N/A	22 (9 Communities & Learning Assistants, 13 visiting artists)

Qualitative data

a. Qualitative data collection from children and young people

ImpactEd designed three qualitative data collection sessions with CYP, which used creative and participatory methods to combine arts-based reflective activities, facilitated group discussion, and structured observation. The three sessions were split across the three age range groups that SLG Art Block supports: 6-11; 13-16; 11-16. The table below shows the activities used, the age groups, and how many young people participated in each activity.

b. Qualitative data collection from parents/carers

Focus groups were conducted with eight parents/carers over two sessions. Questions centred around the perceived impact of SLG Art Block on their children, as well as the extent to which SLG Art Block reduces childcare pressure and contributes to parent/carer wellbeing.

Activity	Description	Age group	# participants
What makes you proud?	Children and young people were asked to show, draw or describe something they were proud of from their time at SLG Art Block.	6–11	34
Physical journey mapping	Stations were laid out to represent three points in time: before, during and after SLG Art Block. Children and young people were asked to move from station to station, showing on their bodies or faces how they felt according to different prompts.	6–11	34
Draw yourself	Children and young people were asked to draw a picture or paint something that represents their personality and/or identity.	13–16	14
Postcards to yourself	Children and young people wrote postcards to a past, present and future version of themselves. Interviewers used structured prompting to encourage children and young people to reflect on their time at SLG Art Block.	13–16	14
Creative journey mapping	Children and young people used paints, pencils, and/or clay to create three images of themselves; before, during and after attending SLG Art Block.	11–16	13
Feedback board	Throughout two of the sessions, labelled boards were pinned around SLG Art Block with post-it notes and young people were invited to add their thoughts at any time. The boards were labelled: – Something I love about Art Block – Something that could be better about Art Block – Something I've learned since coming to Art Block – Something that's changed about me since coming to Art Block	11-16 13-16	20 post-it notes received, some from the same children

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data analysis

Wellbeing survey responses were analysed descriptively. Average wellbeing scores were calculated for each survey round and compared across baseline and final timepoints. For the *Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey*, average scores were compared to ImpactEd's national average in this measure comprising of 997 children's responses gathered across the Summer term 2026.

Quantitative survey data from the parent/carer survey and the creative practitioner survey was analysed descriptively, calculating mean scores and frequencies for each question. Where sample sizes allowed, we also compared responses across relevant subgroups, for example length of attendance for parents/carers and role and place of residence for creative practitioners.

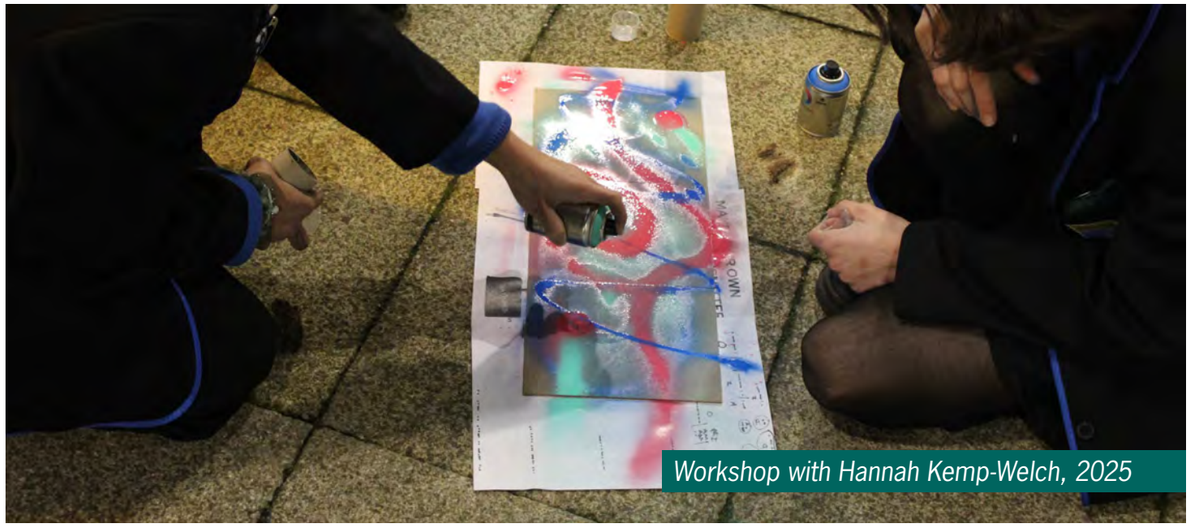
Registration data from the South London Gallery's Upshot account was pulled to understand the number of attendees from October 2024 to August 2026, how often they attended, and their demographics.

Qualitative data analysis

Creative and participatory data from CYP was categorised using a thematic coding framework. Coding combined a deductive approach, using categories drawn from the *Theory of Change*, with an inductive approach to allow new themes to emerge from the data if they did not fit an existing category. Each artefact, such as a postcard, drawing, or facilitator observation, was reviewed and matched to the relevant outcomes and themes.

Focus groups with parents/carers were recorded and transcribed by ImpactEd, with consent from the participants. Data was analysed using the same combined inductive and deductive approach as the qualitative data from children and young people: we coded each extract against the *Theory of Change* outcomes and themes, and captured recurring themes falling outside of the *Theory of Change*.

Data from different methods and stakeholder groups were triangulated to ensure that the findings of this report represent the holistic experience of all parties involved.



Workshop with Hannah Kemp-Welch, 2025

LIMITATIONS

Although this evaluation draws on a wide range of evidence, the following limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

1. Sampling and self-reported experiences

Participants across all methods were self-selecting, i.e. they chose to take part. This includes children and young people, who were not obliged to take part in evaluation activities and so some chose not to participate. Those who did take part in the qualitative sessions were those who happened to attend on the session days and dosage data was not collected, therefore this may not be a representative sample of everyone who uses SLG Art Block.

2. Interpretation of creative methods

Creative and participatory methods involve a degree of interpretation which can be subjective. In particular, observation notes were recorded by facilitators, adding a further layer of interpretation between the child's experience and what was recorded. Where this report draws conclusions from these methods, they should be used as credible reading of evidence rather than an objective measurement.

3. Single timepoint data

The majority of the data collected for the purposes of this evaluation reflects a single point in time. This means that most findings capture participants' perceptions of how they feel in that moment, rather than a measured before-and-after comparison and cannot show whether experiences described are stable over time.

4. Unmatched wellbeing surveys

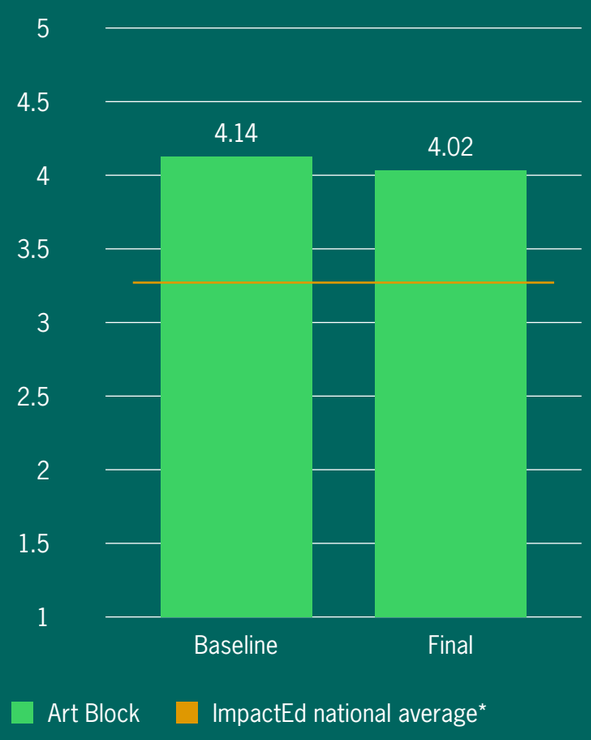
While the wellbeing surveys were administered at two timepoints, responses were collected anonymously and not matched at the individual level. As a result, changes in scores may partly reflect differences in the participants who completed each survey.

How does SLG Art Block support emotional and social wellbeing for participating children and young people?

Wellbeing remained high and participants consistently reported enjoying SLG Art Block

31 children and young people completed the *Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey (S-WEMWBS)* in May, and 18 completed it in July. Their average scores are shown in the graph below compared to ImpactEd's national benchmark for this measure:

S-WEMWBS survey scores

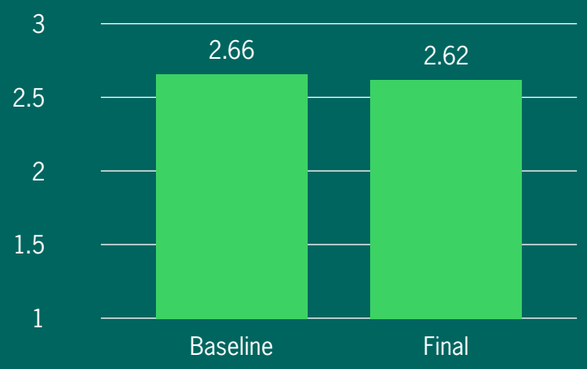


**ImpactEd's national average comprises of responses from 997 pupils during the Summer term of 25-26. Please note that most CYP completing this survey had already been attending SLG Art Block so 'baseline' does not indicate pre-programme in this instance.*

Wellbeing among participating children and young people at SLG Art Block remained broadly stable over time, slightly decreasing at the final timepoint. Wellbeing was considerably higher than ImpactEd's national average of 3.28 out of 5 at both timepoints. It is important to note that responses are not matched, meaning differences in scores may reflect differences in participants who completed the survey at each timepoint rather than changes in wellbeing over time. Additionally, wellbeing is influenced by a wide range of individual and external factors. Changes in wellbeing score should not necessarily be attributed to young people's experiences at SLG Art Block.

Younger children and those with lower reading ages completed a shorter, symbol-supported wellbeing survey, adapted from the *#BeeWell Symbol Survey*. 34 completed the baseline survey in May and 17 did the final survey in June. Their findings are shown below:

Supported wellbeing survey scores



Wellbeing stayed consistently high between the baseline and final timepoints, with a similar small decrease mirroring seen in the *S-WEMWBS* scale scores. As above, these scores are not matched so changes may reflect variations in the participants who completed each survey.

To better understand participants' experience of their wellbeing at SLG Art Block specifically, both surveys also included several custom questions. Participants completing the *S-WEMWBS* were also asked to rate how much they enjoyed their time at SLG Art Block on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot). Average ratings were very high at both baseline (4.71 out of 5) and final (4.72 out of 5), indicating that participants in both rounds reported enjoying their experience. The consistency of these scores suggests that the programme maintained a high level of enjoyment over time.

Participants were also asked, "When you are at SLG Art Block, how happy do you feel?" on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very happy). Average ratings were similarly high, increasing slightly from 4.58 out of 5 at baseline to 4.65 out of 5 at the final timepoint. This suggests that participants consistently reported feeling happy while attending SLG Art Block.

We asked participants of the adapted *wellbeing survey* how they felt at Art Block. Participants could choose from three options; happy, ok, sad. In the baseline survey, 88% of participants chose 'Happy', decreasing to 69% at the final timepoint. In both rounds, all other responses were 'Ok', and no one selected 'Sad'. As before, it should be noted that responses are not matched so differences may reflect the different participants at each timepoint. Additionally, wellbeing states are influenced by a wide range of factors so this change should not be wholly attributed to SLG Art Block.

Overall, wellbeing is influenced by a wide range of factors beyond participation in a single programme. In the absence of a comparison group, changes in overall wellbeing scores cannot be attributed solely to attendance at SLG Art Block. Taken together, these findings suggest that participants consistently have positive experiences of SLG Art Block. Both survey groups reported high levels of enjoyment and happiness while attending the programme, with small changes in overall wellbeing over time.



Workshop with Lexy Morvaridi, 2026

SOCIALISING, FRIENDSHIPS & COMMUNITY

SLG Art Block creates opportunities for young people to make and maintain friendships

SLG Art Block's role in creating the conditions to build and strengthen friendships was one of the clearest themes from the qualitative data collection, appearing across different participatory activities with young people and in focus groups with parents.

In postcards written to their past selves, several young people in the 13-16 age bracket described the importance of their friendships at SLG Art Block. One young person wrote, "*your friend group is way different now because you talked to new people at Art Block*" and another told her past self, "*Dear past [name], you would make a lot more friends at Art Block and you will have so much fun here*". Similarly, another young person wrote to her past self, "*you made life long friends, you became confident*".

"Dear past me, you are way mature now and Art Block is still so fun, more people now come that you would never expect.

Be brave and get to know people"

– Postcard from a young person to their past self

The 6-11 year old group also referenced friendships. In the physical journey mapping exercise, one of the station prompts was '*How do you feel when you come to Art Block?*'. Multiple children responded with happy dances, star jumps and smiles and, when asked why, explained that they were "*excited to see my friends*" and "*happy that I can be with my friends*".



Image 1: What makes you proud? – A child's drawing of themselves playing Uno with a friend.

When drawing something they were proud of at SLG Art Block, one of the 6–11-year-old participants drew themselves playing Uno with a friend (See image 1), highlighting the importance of play and socialising.

When asked to draw or describe something they were proud of at SLG Art Block, one child spoke not about themselves but about a friend who had earned three stars on SLG Art Block's rewards chart for demonstrating behaviours such as kindness and respect. Although only a single example, it illustrates the extent to which friendships and peers can feature prominently in children's reflections on their experiences at SLG Art Block.

Throughout all three qualitative sessions, ImpactEd facilitators observed children playing and being creative together, and young people who were excited to see one another and be together.

SLG Art Block supports young people to improve their social skills

Young people explicitly described how coming to SLG Art Block helped them improve their social skills. One participant wrote a postcard to their past self to explain this (See image 2).

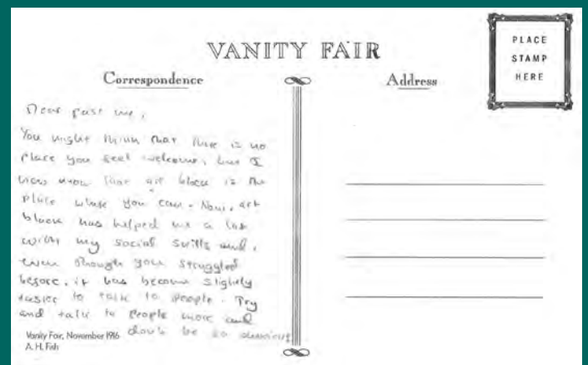


Image 2: Postcard from a young person to their past self, explaining how SLG Art Block has provided opportunities for them to work on their social skills.



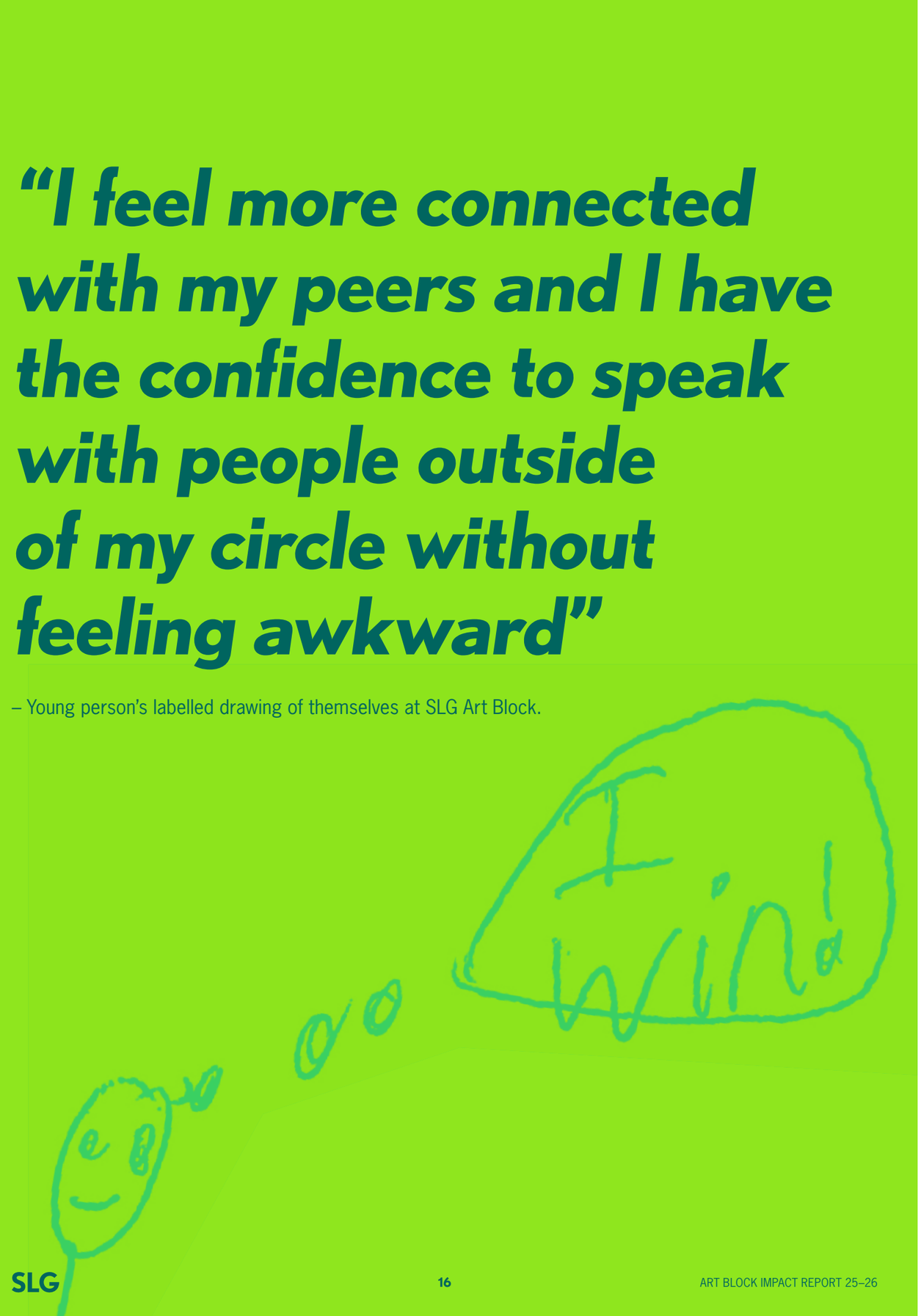
Image 3: Journey Mapping – Young person's labelled drawing of themselves before coming to SLG Art Block and now being at SLG Art Block.

Their advice to their younger self was to "*try and talk to people more and don't be so anxious*".

Improving social skills also emerged as a recurring theme during the creative journey mapping exercise. When prompted to draw how she felt before coming to SLG Art Block (See image 3), one young person drew herself segregated from a group and labelled underneath, "*I used to feel so unincluded in convos about Art Block and that I was missing out on fun and I wanted to be part of it*". Drawing herself now she has started coming to SLG Art Block, she drew herself as part of the group, writing, "*Now I feel more connected with my peers and I have the confidence to speak with people outside of my circle without feeling awkward*". She then reflects that she is able to have "*the bigger and harder convos without feeling too upset about it after, and I can control the maturity of how I speak to others*", suggesting higher levels of emotional regulation.

"I feel more connected with my peers and I have the confidence to speak with people outside of my circle without feeling awkward"

– Young person's labelled drawing of themselves at SLG Art Block.



Another participant drew a similar image of themselves being separated before coming to SLG Art Block and now being part of a group (See image 4). During a follow-up discussion regarding her artwork, the young person said that they now "*feel confident to talk to new people and can speak more confidently and maturely*".

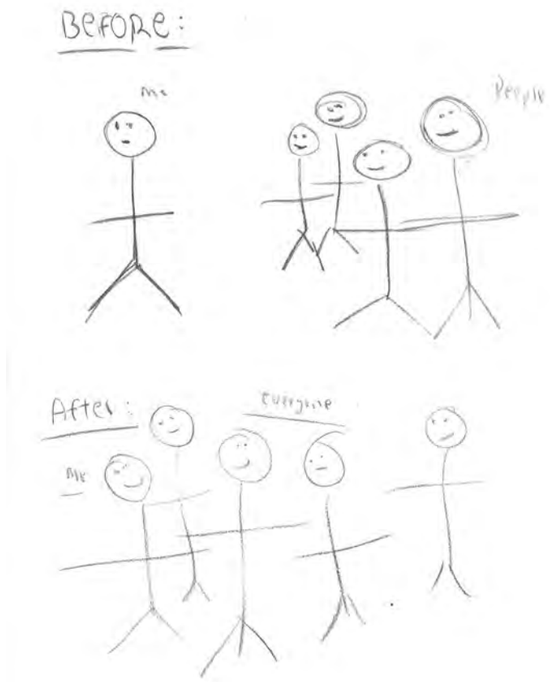


Image 4: Journey Mapping – Young person's drawing of themselves before SLG Art Block.

Post-it notes on the feedback board also referenced social skills in the 'Something I've learned since coming to SLG Art Block' feedback board: "*speaking to new people and becoming more social and more mature*"; "*more friends, more confident*", "*social skills*", "*talking to people*", "*I am more friendly and I speak to more people*".

CYP's improvement in social skills was also picked up by parents/carers. An open-text question in the survey asked, '*What has been the most positive thing about SLG Art Block for you or your child?*', and this was answered frequently with observed improvements in social skills: "*creative and social skills being enhanced*", "*chance to engage with new people*", and "*the ability to play with other children in a safe environment and learn social skills*".

"My child has been more vocal and more open to making friends"

– Parent/carer survey, open-text response to '*What has been the most positive thing about SLG Art Block for you or your child?*'

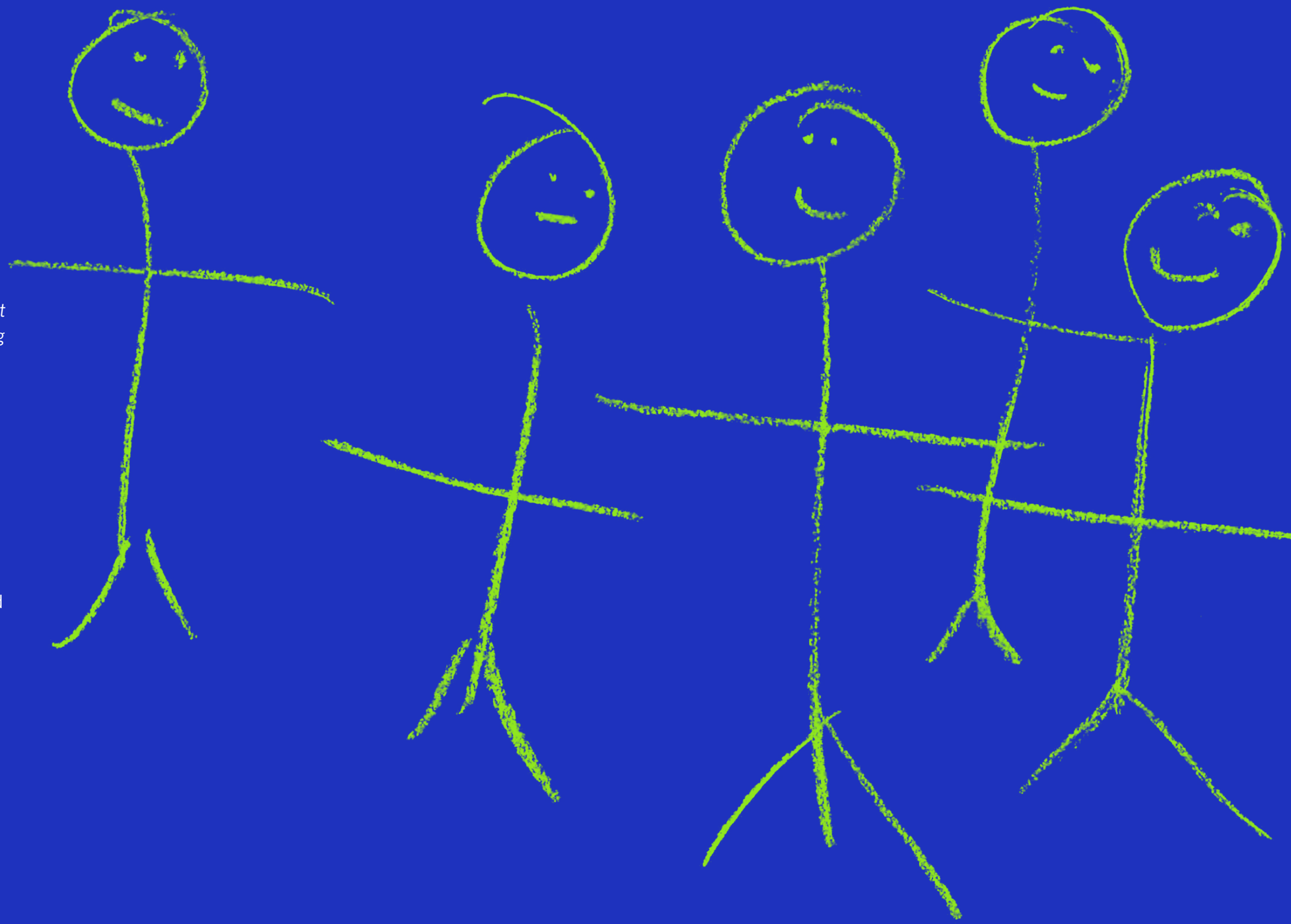
CASE STUDY 1

SLG Art Block's role in supporting SEND children with social skills

One parent described a clear change in her son, who is autistic, since he joined SLG Art Block. Before he started, his world was smaller. She described that "*he would go to school and then he would just come back inside the house, he was a bit scared to be among other children*", spending most of his time at home with his sister. Attending SLG Art Block has steadily changed that: "*it's really improving and Art Block is helping as well because it helps him to socialise and [he is] not scared of being in the big groups anymore with other children*".

The shift is something she can see when she picks her son up from SLG Art Block on Wednesdays. Where he once played alone, "*when you come now you see him outside in the playground like in a big group*". She described that she would arrive to find him playing with other children, and that she noticed him engage in social skills like taking turns on the slide, waiting patiently for his turn, and physical play with other children, something he used to struggle with, stating "*I can't believe he's doing this now*". She described that SLG Art Block has become an important part of her child's routine;

"Every time Art block is open on a Wednesday, he comes and he won't miss it."





Art Block Session, 2025

SLG Art Block helps to improve young people's sense of community

During the parent/carer focus groups, participants emphasised that SLG Art Block had provided opportunities for their children to make new friends, and implied that this was contributing to a growing sense of community. One described how her child had been greeting people from the local area on the way to school; "*She would be saying hello to all these kids and it turns out they're from Art Block, so they see each other, even though they're at different schools, which is amazing actually*".

Another parent agreed that SLG Art Block is *"kind of spreading and lifting friendships and then they see people somewhere, they're saying hello, it's nice"* and goes on to describe SLG Art Block participants as having "*a little community where they know other kids from the area*". A third parent/carer explained that since joining SLG Art Block her child now "*goes around the estate saying hi to everyone, everyone saying hi to him*", again suggesting that SLG Art Block is providing meaningful opportunities for community cohesion.

A parent also described that the mixed age groups in SLG Art Block can create opportunities for young people to connect with people from different ages: "*It's nice to see the older kids look out for the younger kids, and they're really protective of them*".

Young people themselves also corroborated this finding, with several explaining that although they went to the same school as some of the other young people at SLG Art Block, they "*didn't really talk before*" and others noting they had been able to make friends "*from different schools*".

INCLUSION, SAFETY & BELONGING

Young people feel that they belong and they are included at SLG Art Block

SLG Art Block describes itself as an actively inclusive space, and this was consistently reflected in young people's experiences. A post-it note on the 'Something I love about Art Block' board labels this directly; "*it is accessible to everyone*", while a young person's postcard to their past self describes how they used to think there wouldn't be a place where they are welcome, but now they know that SLG Art Block is that place (See image 5):

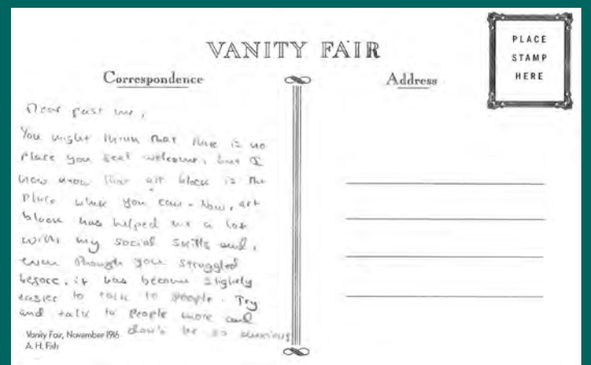


Image 5: Postcard from a young person to their past self describing SLG Art Block as a welcoming place.

During the journey mapping exercise, a young person described herself as "*naturally quite introverted*" and said that she was nervous to come to SLG Art Block on the first day. However, she reflected "*everyone was so welcoming*". She explained that even though she isn't that interested in art, she comes to SLG Art Block because "*it's such a good community, and I feel like I've come out of my shell a bit*".

"I used to go straight home after school and fall asleep, now I have something to do and somewhere to go"

– Young person, reflecting on the value of SLG Art Block during journey mapping

Another young person described how she has been coming to SLG Art Block for over a year and a half and finds it a "*nice, welcoming environment*". When asked what made it welcoming, she explained that "*I feel like part of the community and like […] I never feel shunned*". She also described that staff are "*always there to talk to you if you need it*". When describing her experience of SLG Art Block, another young person described an inclusive environment, explaining that "*everyone can do fun activities – no one is left out*".

Parents and carers also described SLG Art Block as an inclusive place, where their children were free to be themselves and have fun. In focus groups, a parent commented that her child likes SLG Art Block as "*he doesn't feel forced into doing activities he doesn't want to do. They allow him to join in or do other things if he doesn't want to*".
Parents also talked about how SLG Art Block creates conditions where children can be themselves; "*My child is loud and he likes to scream and at Art Block they let him. They have these big headphones if children need them*". Another parent noted that her son appreciated the sensory toys and activities provided at SLG Art Block.

In the creative practitioners survey, it was clear that both Community & Learning Assistants and visiting artists shared SLG Art Block's aim of being inclusive. A Communities & Learning Assistant explained, "*It's important to ensure that the children are cared for at all times, and help to carry out any needs for further support (e.g. neurodivergence, different interests, and ways of learning or personalities etc) that children may have, on behalf of SLG*". An artist described the importance of representation, saying that they wanted young people "*to see a practitioner who looked like them or went against their preconceived idea of what an illustrator (for example) "should" look like*", challenging preconceptions and stereotypes. Other artists said that the most important part of their role for young people was meeting different needs, for example, "*My role [is to] foster that learning environment and excitement […] perhaps most importantly a responsive/adaptable approach to the group's needs*", and another stated they wanted to "*deliver a creative project with sensitivity to the young people's needs and circumstances*".

This suggests that creative practitioners actively cultivate a space which feels inclusive, representative and aims to meet the needs of all children. It is likely that this focus on inclusivity has contributed to young people describing SLG Art Block as a welcoming and supportive environment where they feel like they belong and they matter.

"Everyone is treated in a way that includes all no matter what"

– Staff member answering the question, 'What has been most valuable about working with SLG?'

Young people and their parents trust SLG Art Block staff

It was clear from qualitative sessions with young people that their trust in the SLG Art Block staff is an important contributing factor in helping them to feel welcome and happy in the space. Many post-it notes on the feedback board under 'Something I love about Art Block' reference relationships with staff: "*the amount of adults that don't judge and make you feel welcome and included*"; "*the people*"; "*how welcoming the environment and staff are*"; "*how supportive everybody who works here is*"; "*how kind everyone is*". Similarly, when asked about how they feel about coming to SLG Art Block during the physical journey mapping, a child responded with a big happy smile and, when asked why, confirmed that SLG Art Block made her feel, "*happy because [staff member name] is kind to me*".

Parent focus groups highlighted how they feel safe leaving their children with the staff at SLG Art Block: "*I feel like it's safe. And I think […] that's very important*". One parent described the support provided by SLG Art Block during the 'red v blue school wars', following social media posts in February 2026 encouraging fights between students across schools in south London. Her child usually walked home by himself from SLG Art Block, but she explained that "*during that online stuff, Art Block did contact me and they actually walked him home as well so I appreciated that*".



Pride screenprinting workshop with Jesse Childs, 2026

CASE STUDY 2

Showcasing the strong relationships between children and Art Block staff

One parent's account shows how SLG Art Block's relationships with children can reach beyond art activities. Her son has special educational needs and first came to SLG Art Block before he was diagnosed. She was open with the team from the start, explaining to them *"I think he's on the spectrum. I'm working on getting him diagnosed, but these are his triggers"*. What followed was a tailored, collaborative approach, with the parent describing how the team *"worked with me, putting behavioural contracts in place for my son and holding him accountable while also giving him enough time to have the time out"*. The staff were proactive with contacting her so she could pop in to and support with her son's emotional regulation if needed.

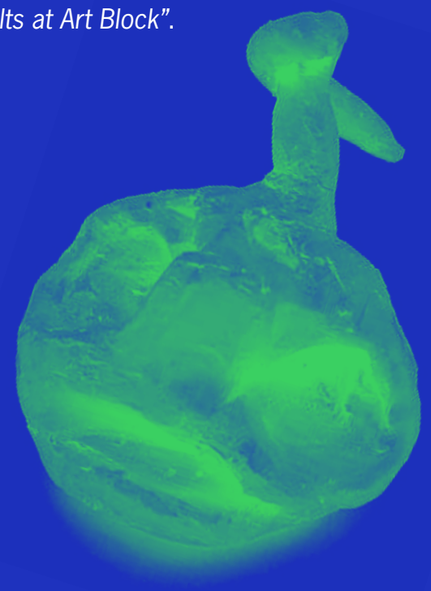
The parent credits the team with helping her child develop socially and emotionally. They are, she said, *"really good at regulating his emotions in Art Block"*, and *"it's helping him navigate how to make friends, how to play within the rules of games"*. She puts this down to how the staff work with children: *"they get down to their level and like they don't shout, they give them their space, but they also give them time and listen to them, which is really nice and they feel heard. It's just a safe space"*.

The support became most significant during a family bereavement. The parent described that her child struggled during this time, but that the support that a staff member at SLG Art Block provided was invaluable; *"she kind of became like my son's main kind of soundboard and she actually took the time. Didn't matter what time it was, what session it was. She was there to support him"*.

Another parent described an incident in which another child made a racially discriminatory comment to her child. She said this was the first time she or her children had experienced anything of this kind in the area, so it wasn't something she'd previously worried about. She praised how SLG Art Block handled it: she was called and given a full explanation of what happened, including that staff had removed her child from the situation at the time, and that the parent of the other child involved had also been made aware. She said she was *"very impressed with the way that they handled that"* and there was *"no long term harm done"*. The way that the staff dealt with this incident reinforced her confidence that they were able to *"not only have the kids play by themselves but also supervise them socially as well"*.

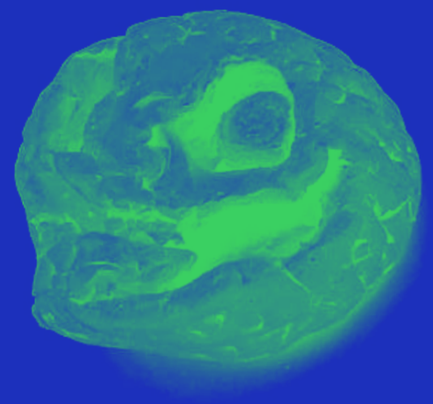
Appreciation and trust in SLG Art Block staff was also mirrored in the parent/carer survey. An open-text question asked parents 'What has been the most positive thing about SLG Art Block for you or your child?', and several responses referenced the supportiveness of staff:
"[…] The encouragement they receive from the adults at Art Block".





When asked if they had any other comments or feedback to share, some parents/carers took this opportunity to thank staff directly: *"The team has always been helpful and supportive to my son and my family and I am grateful"*, and *"Amazing team that go the extra mile to make sure you and your children feel heard and safe"*.

It is clear from the creative practitioners survey that safety and safeguarding is a core priority for the adults at SLG Art Block. When asked about the most important part of their role, safety came up more consistently than any other theme. Seven of the nine SLG Art Block Communities & Learning Assistants described it as their main priority: *"ensuring their safety"*, *"to safeguard them"* and *"providing supervision and support/ safeguarding"*. Some artists talked about safety within the context of their teaching and facilitation practice: *"to teach new skills while maintaining a safe environment"*; *"facilitating a safe space to experiment in the kitchen"*. These descriptions suggest that the safe environment that young people and parents/carers value at SLG Art Block is a result of a deliberate priority by staff, rather than something that has arisen by chance.



SELF-AWARENESS, EMOTIONAL REGULATION & RESILIENCE

Children and young people at SLG Art Block are able to identify and reflect on their emotions

Across all age groups, children and young people demonstrated the ability to recognise, name and describe their emotions. This ranged from younger children reflecting on how they felt when they first attended SLG Art Block, with one explaining "*I was scared because people might be rude and I was a bit shy*", to describing their range of emotions they experienced while attending: "*I can be sad because I miss my parents*" and "*Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes I'm sad*".

Young people in the 11-16 age group also demonstrated self-reflection through creative activities. During creative journey mapping, one young person created three clay models of themselves representing before their time at SLG Art Block, during SLG Art Block, and how they imagined themselves in the future (See image 8). As they described the sculptures, they reflected on changes in how they viewed themselves over time. They explained that the first model had cracked, jagged skin because it represented "*the people I hadn't met yet*" and baby teeth because they "*didn't know things then*". In the second model, longer hair represented growing maturity, while smoother skin reflected that "*I know lots of people now*". Looking ahead, they imagined themselves with very smooth skin and a smiling face, explaining that "*Art Block has improved my speaking skills, I can practise speaking to new people*" and that the smile "*represents how nice I am*".

This example illustrates the young person's capacity to reflect on their own emotional and social development and to express those reflections through creative practice. While it is not possible to conclude from this research that SLG Art Block was solely responsible for these changes, the young person themselves linked their increased confidence and social skills to their experiences at SLG Art Block. More broadly, the activity provided an opportunity for participants to articulate their feelings, identity and personal development in ways that align with SLG Art Block's aim of supporting emotional awareness and self-expression.



Image 6: Journey Mapping – young person's clay models of themselves throughout their time at SLG Art Block.

Taking part in creative activities encourages young people to overcome setbacks

One of the most frequently coded themes from the qualitative sessions with CYP was resilience. Many children and young people described creative activities that hadn't gone to plan, and how they had overcome setbacks, learned something new, and tried again. In the physical journey mapping activity, we asked children to think about a time when they found something hard at SLG Art Block. Several children showed angry or sad faces and, when prompted, described mishaps with materials, or projects not turning out as they expected. However, in almost all cases, children also went on to describe what they did to reach a positive outcome. For example, one child described issues working with clay; "*I put too much water in, it went all soggy*" and went on to explain that they learned how to fix the problem, "*I had to make it again, it turned out good*". Another child explained how slime-making got out of hand; "*It went on my clothes […] and the activator went in my mouth*" and then described working with slime as "*so fun*". Some of the young people in the 13-16 group explicitly described resilience and coping with setbacks in their postcards to their past or current selves. One stated that they had learned to crochet at SLG Art Block "*even though it was hard*" and advised her past self to be resilient (See image 9). Young people's self-reflection here indicates that they recall the creative process as well as the end product, with their accounts demonstrating how moments of difficulty were reframed as opportunities for learning and growth.



Image 7: Postcard from a young person to their past self describing the resilience developed in learning to crochet.

Another young person wrote a letter to their current self, in response to the prompt 'What do you know about yourself now since you started coming to Art Block?' simply stating "*I've overcome my fear of not doing good enough*", see image 8.



Image 8: Postcard from a young person to their current self.

I've overcame my fear of not doing good enough

There is some evidence that SLG Art Block helps some children regulate their emotions

Some data suggests that SLG Art Block may support children to identify and regulate their emotions. In the physical journey mapping exercise, one child aged 6-11 reflected that they sometimes arrived at SLG Art Block feeling angry, explaining "*I get angry at school sometimes*" but described that coming to SLG Art Block "*makes it better*". When asked why, she described "*I can see my friends, I can have fun*". Although we can't establish a direct causal link, this comment suggests that the environment at SLG Art Block provides a space where this young person can regulate their emotions and decompress after a difficult day at school.'



Image 9: Journey Mapping drawing: Before SLG Art Block, during SLG Art Block, and the future.

Several young people in the 11-16 year old group explained that coming to SLG Art Block stopped them from "*doomscrolling*" and being on their phones. This is best shown through a young person's drawing of themselves before, during and after SLG Art Block (See image 9). Describing the drawing to facilitators afterwards, the young person explained that before SLG Art Block she used to go home, lie in bed and scroll, "*wasting my time*" and she drew this section in blue to represent sadness. In contrast, the drawing of herself at SLG Art Block is mostly in yellow, "*happy colours*", with red lines between the people indicating new friendships. In the bottom corner of the middle section, the young person has drawn everyone's phones put away. Although they are allowed their phones at SLG Art Block, she explained "*we just don't really go on our phones when we're here*". The third drawing shows the young person studying at university. She has plans to go to medical school and become a cardio surgeon.

Another young person in the 11-16 year old group described that expressing herself through different creative mediums at Art Block "*helps me mentally*", and another agreed that "*it's good to have a space away from home and school pressure and relax*".

Not being allowed to come to SLG Art Block is disappointing for children

According to registration data collected through UpShot, SLG Art Block has seen a drastic increase in new and repeated attendance over the past two years. 241 children and young people have attended from October 1 2024 to the point of writing (20 August 2026), which is a 139% increase in unique attendance from the two years prior (October 2022 – September 2024). The most significant increase was witnessed among 11+s, where the figure increased from 55 young people to 162 (195% increase). Of these attendees, 68% (165 CYP) attended for the first time after October 1 2024, meaning that there was a significant increase in engagement from new attendees driving the overall increased attendance and demand for the programme. At the same time, the number of CYP who only attended once halved between the reporting period and the two years prior (from 20% to 10%), and the number of returning CYP who attended 20+ times increased from 25% to 35%. Since October 1 2024, 4 CYP have attended 100+ times, one of whom even attended 130+ times. The demand on SLG Art Block is therefore the result of both new interest and more longstanding repeat attendance. While this is a highly positive reflection on the programme and its benefits, the capacity of the space and the staffing resources available remain the same.

Parents described how their children can feel disappointed when they are not able to come to SLG Art Block. SLG Art Block is oversubscribed, particularly for 6-11 year olds, meaning sessions sometimes are at full capacity and children have to be turned away. The capacity reflects both the limitations of the physical space and the number of sessions which can be delivered within the available funding.

As one parent explained, "*they used to have more sessions for the younger kids but because of funding issues now it's just once a week*". Parents explained "*they are always upset when they cannot open for whatever reason, not enough staff. It's a big disappointment*".

Another described "*it really affects my son. He has Art Therapy on Wednesday and sometimes if he's had a hard session he just wants to kind of go to SLG Art Block and have fun but sometimes it's full*".

This finding was also corroborated by the 6-11 year old group. When asked during the physical journey mapping how they feel when they come to SLG Art Block, one child made a sad face and explained "*sometimes they say I can't come in because there's too many people*" and another described "*sometimes I can't take part if I'm late*".

Together, these findings highlight the challenges associated with meeting demand within the programme's existing capacity. Securing funding for younger children can be challenging as they are often not seen as 'at risk' to meet thresholds for support. This can create difficulties in resourcing consistent early intervention despite the potential value of providing support before children's needs escalate.



Sound art workshop with Felix Taylor, 2025

For the older groups of children and young people, they are usually less likely to be turned away due to needing a lower staff-to-child ratio, however some of them expressed sadness and worry about having to leave SLG Art Block once they pass the maximum age of 16. During the journey mapping, one young person hesitated about drawing themselves in the future, explaining "*I don't want to think about not coming to Art Block*". On the post-it feedback board under 'Something I'd change about Art Block', several young people pinned comments about wanting to continue accessing SLG Art Block: "*increase age range*"; "*16+*"; "*increase age from 16 to 18 so I can stay longer*".

If SLG Art Block receives funding to expand the age range, there is evidence to suggest that young people would continue to come and benefit from the space beyond 16 years old. The SLG Art Block teams are currently working on developing better signposting and support for young people to join the SLG's youth collective, the Art Assassins, as a pathway for those ageing out.

In what ways does participation in SLG Art Block support children and young people to build on their confidence and aspirations for their future?

IDENTITY AND CONFIDENCE

Young people can be themselves at SLG Art Block

The 'Draw yourself' activity for the 13-16 year old group indicated that young people were generally comfortable expressing their identities and interests, including the things that make them unique. Young people drew things that were important to them, like family and religion, while others drew themselves actively engaging in their hobbies like swimming, dancing, and fashion (See image 10).

As part of the physical journey mapping with 6-11 year olds, a child responded to 'How did you feel before coming to Art Block?' with a slow, crouching walk like a snail. When prompted, the child explained that they were *"nervous, not sure if I wanted to go"*. When asked 'How do you feel now when you're at Art Block?', the same child opened their arms out wide, taking up space, and explained *"I have opened up. Before I squeezed myself in and now I have come out of my cocoon"*. This physical description shows the powerful journey that this child has been on since joining SLG Art Block, from feeling small and closed off to feeling that they are able to take up space, and, as they put it, come out of their cocoon.

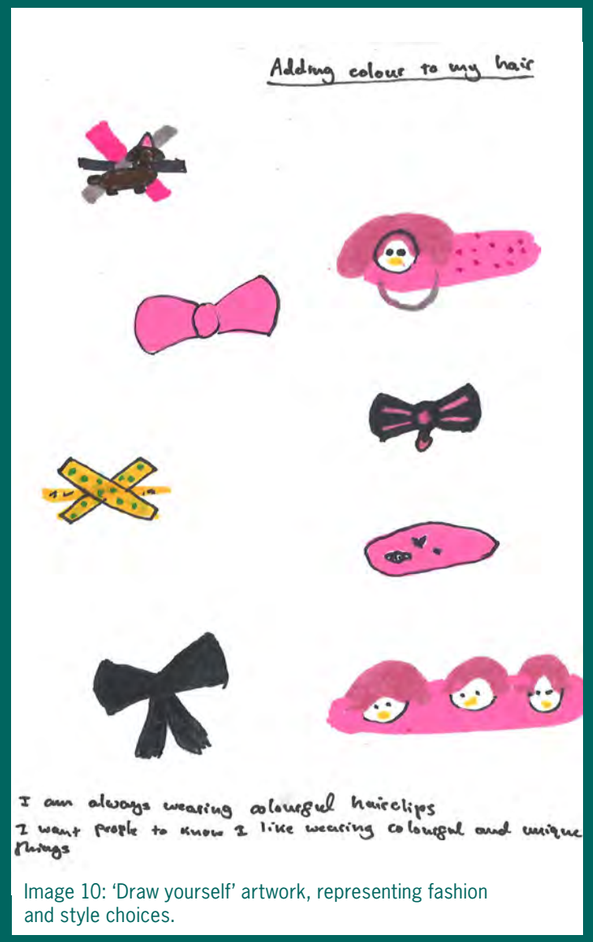


Image 10: 'Draw yourself' artwork, representing fashion and style choices.

SLG Art Block encourages young people to build their confidence

In the creative practitioners' survey, participants were asked to reflect on the most important aspect of their role for children and young people at SLG Art Block. Many practitioners described confidence-building as a deliberate aim of their practice, rather than a side effect. One said their role is to give young people *"opportunities to grow within themselves creatively, by giving prompts and access to new resources and creative tools"*, framing this explicitly as nurturing *"soft skills in communication and confidence building"*. Another described their focus as helping children *"feel confident in a new craft"*.

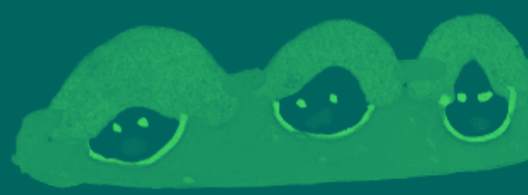
Another practitioner described confidence building as the central purpose of their role: *"helping the young people build confidence in themselves and their creative voice […] creating a space where they felt seen, encouraged and unafraid to make mistakes was key"*. They tied this directly to impact, judging a session's success by whether children left feeling *"more confident, more curious and more open to exploring their potential"*.

This focus on confidence seemed to be felt by the young people themselves. On the feedback board, young people reflected on what had changed about them since coming to SLG Art Block. While some post-its concentrated on making friends and being more social, others focused on more specific self-confidence skills: *"being less embarrassed"*; *"my confidence"*; *"I have started making more noise in a good way"*. Although we are not able to see the mechanisms for these changes, these comments suggest that young people attribute SLG Art Block to helping them to grow in confidence in various ways.

A few open-text comments in the parent/carer survey also picked up on this theme of confidence. One parent said the most positive thing about SLG Art Block was *"watching their confidence grow"*, while another had observed *"more independence for my child, more confidence, less stress, and more positive in general"*.

"I have opened up. Before I squeezed myself in and now I have come out of my cocoon."

– Child describing how they feel at Art Block



CASE STUDY 3

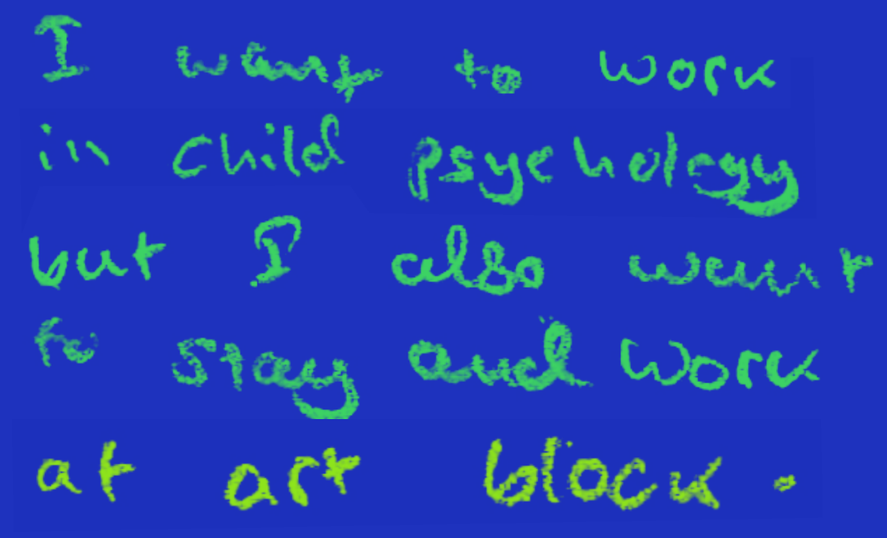
Sparking a more serious interest in art

For one family, SLG Art Block began with a child's curiosity and led to that child pursuing further arts opportunities. The parent recalled passing the SLG Art Block space on the school run. Her daughter, she said, "*was just drawn to the fact that oh it looks colourful, children are there I want to go there*".

Once she started attending regularly, the parent observed that her daughter loved the creative activities: "*My whole wall is full of art of Art Block, she always brings things home*". This growing interest in art led to her daughter applying for an arts scholarship at her secondary school. The parent had no hand in it: "*I didn't apply for that scholarship. She came from school herself and said she went and tried and she was accepted*". Asked whether her daughter would have done it without SLG Art Block, she was clear: "*I think she wouldn't because this place has given her the understanding to know how to pursue the dream to do what she likes doing*".

"My whole wall is full of art from Art Block, she always brings things home"

– Parent/carer observation



FURTHERING INTERESTS & AMBITIONS

SLG Art Block encourages children and young people to pursue their interests and goals

Parents described how coming to SLG Art Block led to their children learning new skills and pursuing new creative opportunities. One reflected on the time that SLG Art Block provided an indoor pool, voted for by children and young people. For this parent, the indoor pool gave her daughter *"her first experience of swimming"*. The parent, who was *"scared of water"* and had avoided taking her children to a pool, explained *"bringing that pool into the Art Block room was just like something's waking me up. Like I realised she would be fine, she can go in the pool"*. With this new assurance, the parent began taking her daughter to the local leisure centre, and *"now she is in stage 8 swimming and she loves it"*. The experience that SLG Art Block provided helped spark a new interest for this child, and gave her parent the confidence to support her in pursuing that interest further.

When writing postcards to their future selves, young people expressed a variety of goals and ambitions. This mostly concentrated on future studies and careers. Several young people wanted to go to university to study a range of courses; law, history, forensic science, medicine. Others named specific career paths like becoming a lawyer, teacher, pilot. It is not possible to attribute these named career paths and aspirations to SLG Art Block since they could come from a variety of other sources including school, home, and young people's own interests and self-belief. Facilitators did, however, find it encouraging to observe SLG Art Block staff actively showing interest and engaging in conversation with young people about their ambitions and next steps.

The young people we observed seemed to enjoy sharing their goals with SLG Art Block staff and asked questions about staff's own career paths and studies.

"Dear future me, are you famous for something like music or forensic science like you said you would? Are you married? Are you rich?"

– Young person's letter to their future self

In their postcards to their future selves, some young people also referenced SLG Art Block specifically: "*Dear future me, I hope you're still doing history and on the path to be a lawyer. Hope you're still havin fun at Art Block*"; "*Dear future me, I want to work in child psychology but I also want to stay and work at Art Block*" (See image 11). These types of comments suggest that some young people visualise continued attendance and involvement at SLG Art Block as part of their futures.

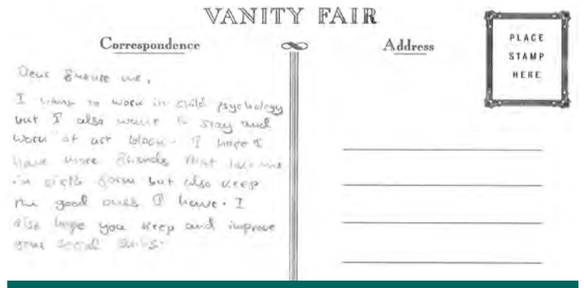


Image 11: Young person's postcard to their future self, explaining how they want to work in child psychology as well as work at SLG Art Block.

What opportunities does SLG Art Block create for children and young people to learn about and practise artistic processes and materials?

USING DIFFERENT MATERIALS AND FEELING PROUD

Young people learn about and use a range of artistic processes and materials.

Across all age groups, children and young people readily described the art they had made, the new materials they had worked with and the skills they had learned during their time at SLG Art Block. A child in the 6-11 year old group drew a picture of a realistic moon that he made at SLG Art Block. Recounting the process, he explained "*I sketched it out and painted it, it looked just like the moon*". He had practised at home first before making the final product at Art Block. Upon finishing the piece, he felt "*great*" and it is now hanging on the wall in his living room at home "*so everyone can see it*".

Many children and young people described enjoying learning to sculpt with clay, making a variety of outputs including mugs, vases and plates. In the 'I'm proud' exercise, one child aged 11-16 drew a picture of their clay painting, describing it as being "*hard*" but being proud because "*I did it anyways*" (See image 12).



Image 12: 'I'm proud' exercise, learning resilience through clay painting.

Other activities like collaging, cooking, photography, and drawing plants were also referenced, and many young people in the 11-16 year old group found crocheting to be both challenging and rewarding, with many noting the skill as something they had learned at SLG Art Block on the feedback board, as well as in their postcards to their past selves (see image 13): "*I know how to crochet. I thought it was way too hard before*"; "*I learned how to crochet!! The greatest skills ever!!*".

In focus groups, one parent explained that SLG Art Block exposed their children to artistic materials and processes that they wouldn't have access to at home; "*a lot of the activities that they provide, I'm not able to give them. So things like bracelet making, bag making…*". She went on to explain, "*my husband and I, we're not really artistic people […] so I don't know how to enrich my children creatively. So I'm ever so grateful for them to have this place and provision to support this creative side to their development*".

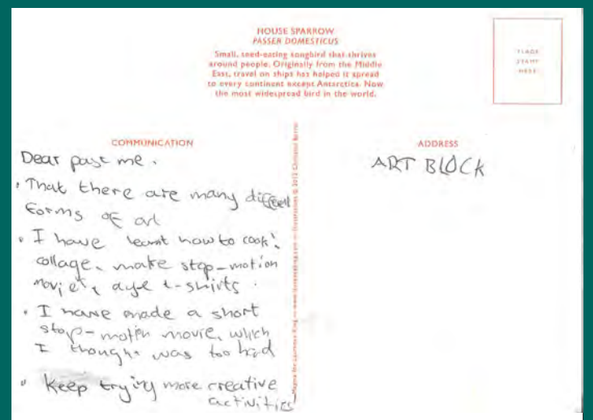


Image 13: Young person's postcard to themselves describing what they had learned at SLG Art Block.

"I know how to crochet. I thought it was way too hard before"

– CYP reflecting on what they have learned at SLG Art Block



Young people feel proud of what they create at SLG Art Block

In the focus groups, parents/carers emphasised their children's pride in their creations at SLG Art Block. Most parents/carers agreed that their children often bring their work home, "*it's all over the house*", and ask them to display it. "*My whole wall is art of the art block […] she treasures absolutely everything*". As one parent put it, "*I don't know what to do with all the stuff now! But yes, they're very proud of what they're aiming to accomplish. And I'm proud of them too*".

Some parents also recalled how their children had learned skills at SLG Art Block and then continued developing these at home; "*When she has done an activity she will come home and finish it off*" and, discussing slime-making, "*they learnt how to make it at Art Block. So then they make it at home*".

Young people also described feeling proud of their creations at SLG Art Block. One child was pleased that her drawing was on the SLG Art Block wall for everyone to see (See image 14) especially as "*I had put all my effort in it*", while another described "*I learned to make a bracelet and I was proud because I've never done that before*". One child described feeling proud of the clay mug they made "*because it looked nice*" and another described the process of making a collage, which she felt proud of because it was "*all me*". Rather than draw something they were proud of, one young person simply wrote "*Something I am proud of is me! But also my learning in school and ART BLOCK!!!*" (See image 15).



Image 14: 'I'm proud of myself' drawing, a young person's art displayed on the SLG Art Block wall.



Image 15: 'I'm proud of myself' description.

RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

Children and young people have inconsistent experiences of the range of activities at SLG Art Block.

Responding to the feedback board, 'What could be better about Art Block?' several children and young people asked for "*more activities*" or "*more variety of activities*" and some labelled specific sessions they would like to do: "*we want to bring back crocheting*"; "*cooking or baking*"; "*more range of activities e.g cooking*". One young person wrote in a postcard to her future self "*I hope we get to do a hair workshop at Art Block*", an activity which SLG Art Block have planned for August 2026 in response to other requests for this activity by children and young people. Another thought that SLG Art Block could be improved by adding more activities "*art stuff but also other activities, not just art*". One of the children in the 6-11 year old group said that their older sibling "*gets to do way more stuff*" in the older group sessions.

On the other hand, some young people praised the variety of activities, with two post-it notes explicitly stating this on the 'Something I love about Art Block' feedback board: "*the range of different art activities we do*"; "*the activities*" and others referenced enjoying creative activities at SLG Art Block during journey the mapping exercise.



Art Block Session, 2026

Me! But ~~also~~ also my learning in school and ART BLOCK!!!

In what ways does SLG Art Block reduce pressures on local families and contribute to parent/carer wellbeing?

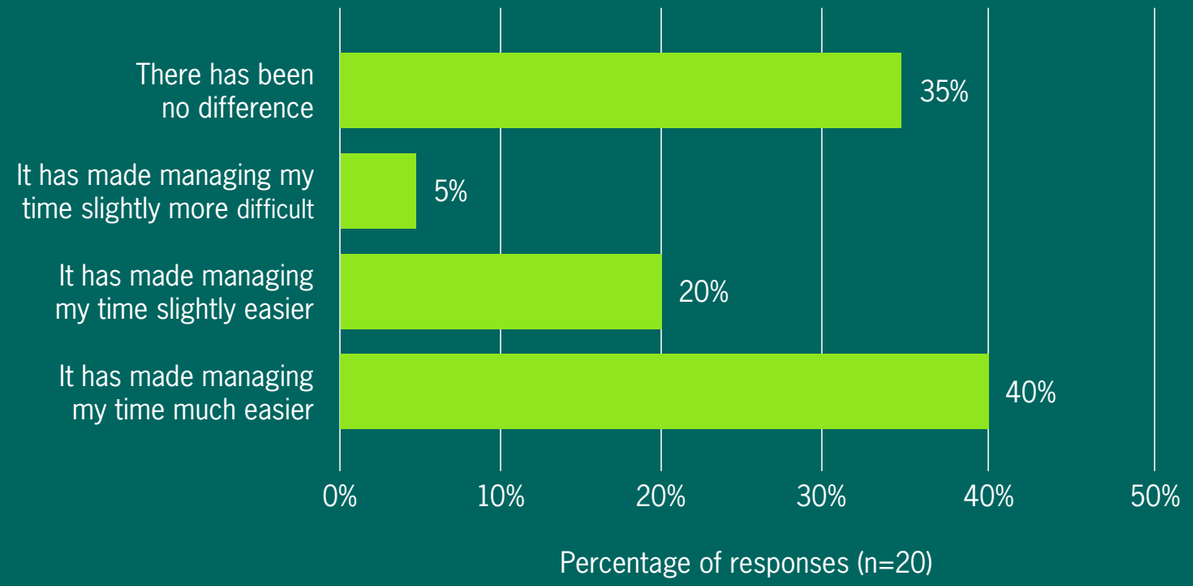
RELIEVING PRESSURES AND GRANTING PEACE OF MIND

For some parents, SLG Art Block frees up time and eases childcare pressure

In the parent/carer survey, the majority of respondents, 60%, said that having their children attend SLG Art Block has made managing their time easier, with 8 parents stating it has made managing their time 'much easier'. 7 respondents (35%) said that SLG Art Block has made no difference to their time management, while one said it has made time management slightly more difficult. For 35% of parents/carers, SLG Art Block forms either a small or major role in their regular childcare arrangements, while the remaining 65% said this was either not applicable, or that SLG Art Block did not play a part in their childcare plans. This suggests that some parents do consider SLG Art Block to relieve childcare pressure, although this is not the case for everyone.

During focus groups, parents and carers described how leaving their children at SLG Art Block gives them time to get on with other things: "*When they come down to Art Block, that means I can go upstairs and do all the other things I need to do. If they were here I wouldn't be able to*". One parent described how SLG Art Block has alleviated some stress in her weekly routine: "*Wednesday is my day off during the working week. So of course I've got to do shopping and this and that […] and very often I was saying to [child's name], 'well, we need to go shopping' and she's moaning and saying she doesn't want to. But now I can leave her at Art Block and I can do the shopping and she doesn't have to moan.*"

Impact of SLG Art Block on parents' time management



Another parent explained how having a child at SLG Art Block makes it easier when she works from home; "*I have an extra hour and a half to finish work. So I know that there's not going to be that 'mum, I want that, mum I want this' – it gives me that time to actually finish up my day*".

One parent linked the practical relief to something more personal: "*I did it for the free childcare at first*", she admitted, "*Because being at home with two kids quite close in age […], you just want a break. I've really got time back for myself. There's so much you can do in two hours, all your housework and all your paperwork*". Another parent explained that dropping her older children at SLG Art Block gives her more one-on-one time with her youngest child: "*It gives me just time, really, to take care of my little one*".

Similarly, in the open-text section of the survey, a parent explained that the best thing about SLG Art Block for their family was "*having a bit of time for myself. Knowing they are being looked after and having fun*".



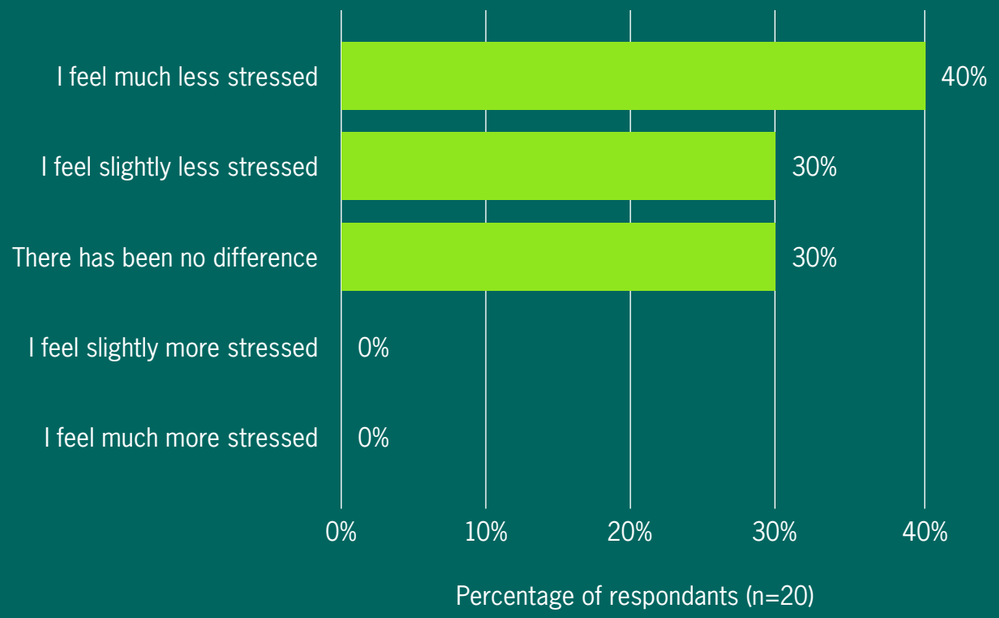
Workshop with Different Gravy, 2025

SLG Art Block reduces parental stress and gives peace of mind

70% of parents/carers reported reduced stress since their child started attending SLG Art Block. Of those, 40% said they were 'much less stressed', and 30% were 'slightly less stressed'. 30% of respondents saw no difference in their stress levels, and nobody reported increased stress.

In focus groups, this notion of reduced stress was underpinned by knowing their children were safe and happy at SLG Art Block: "*I've got peace of mind because obviously I hear them outside as well, so I know they're having a good time*" while another stated simply "*I just have peace of mind because I know they're safe there*".

Impact of SLG Art Block on parent/care stress levels



BUILDING COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

SLG Art Block builds connection for some parents, although not for everyone

65% of parents/carers said they felt more connected to other local families since their children started attending SLG Art Block. 35% said they felt no different, and nobody reported a decrease in connection. However, 50% of parents also reported having no interaction at all with other parents through SLG Art Block, which may be explained by the fact that some parents/carers pick up and drop their children off directly while some of the older children make their own way home. The implication is that for some families, connectedness runs through their child's social world rather than direct contact between parents/carers themselves.

Trend analysis of the data suggests some links between the parent/carer reports of connectedness and the length of time their child has been attending SLG Art Block. 83% of parents/carers whose children have attended SLG Art Block for over a year report feeling more connected, compared with 38% of those attending for under a year. A possible reason for this could be that longer, more consistent attendance leads to more opportunities to meet other families. However, sample sizes are small at this stage (n=20) so these findings should be interpreted indicatively.

The topic of community was also raised in the parent/carer focus groups. One parent, who was one of the first in her friendship group to have children, explained that "*coming to Art Block, I've found it good to meet people […] Now when I walk them to school I see other people who I've seen at Art Block and I can say hello, because they're friends with my kids. It's nice, you know, in a way, it's community*". Another described a similar, light touch connection: "*I personally made a few friends, you know, when I'm picking them up, we just started talking […] it's not like we visit each other's houses or anything, but it's nice to see people*".

In another focus group, a parent described spending time with other parents while their children are at SLG Art Block; "*Yeah, we know each other, and we're getting to see each other. Sometimes the kids are playing here and we're sitting there with some parents outside. It's really good, lovely*". Another parent said that although they "*don't spend time*" at SLG Art Block, "*I do feel welcome there*".

Demand for more provision suggests some pressure remains unmet

Parents consistently expressed a desire for additional SLG Art Block provision. Suggestions included increasing the number of sessions, reinstating more frequent provision for younger children, and opening more frequently on Saturdays. Parents often linked these requests to recent funding constraints. As one parent explained, they hoped that the findings of this report would help SLG Art Block "*apply for more funding which […] goes on more days*".

While the findings presented in this section suggest that SLG Art Block plays an important role in reducing pressures on many families and contributes positively to parent/carer wellbeing, the recurring calls for increased provision indicate that families would value greater access to SLG Art Block than is currently available.

How does participation in SLG Art Block support professional development and access to career opportunities?

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS

SLG Art Block provides career opportunities for local creatives

32% of respondents to the creative practitioner survery live in Southwark and 50% in a neighbouring borough, suggesting that Art Block plays a role in providing career opportunities for local creatives.

Creative practitioners valued working at SLG Art Block because it helped them to feel connected to the local community. One artist who lives in Southwark said it was "*meaningful to do some creative work in my own community as I am local*" and another Southwark resident enjoyed "*rooting my work in my local community and establishing relationships in Peckham*".

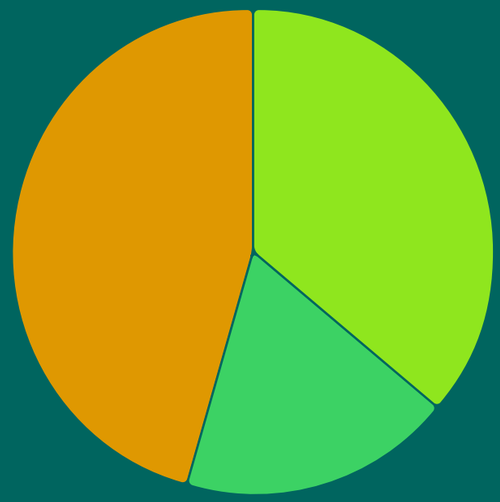
A Communities & Learning Assistant said that working at SLG Art Block "*helped me to stay and feel connected to the community of Southwark*", pointing to small details like the introduction of a vegetable garden growing callaloo, a staple in Caribbean cuisine, as "*I had no idea what part of this plant the seeds came from, so it was a huge learning moment about my heritage for me too*". Even a practitioner living outside of Southwark and its neighbouring boroughs described SLG Art Block as offering access to "*its closest community" and said the experience would "continue to shape my delivery going forward*".

Working at SLG Art Block has a positive impact on professional development

In the creative practitioners survey, 91% of respondents reported a very positive impact on their professional development, and the remaining 9% reported a slightly positive impact. Nobody reported no impact or a negative impact. All nine of the SLG Art Block Communities & Learning Assistants and 11 of the 13 artists reported a 'strongly positive' impact on professional development. Within this, SLG Art Block's role in 'building professional connections or networks' was the strongest-rated statement (4.36 out of 5, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree), while 'developing new skills or approaches' was rated more moderately (3.50 out of 5, same scale). Creative practitioners described different kinds of development. One Communities & Learning Assistant described a direct effect on their practice: "*Having the opportunity to explore my creative practice with projects I have helped with at Art Block. And having the opportunity to illustrate and design stuff.*" An artist described it as professional insight: "*it was really valuable to see and experience a model of youth engagement that seemingly works very well [...] it has effectively become a very informative, generative data point for me with regards to engagement within arts settings.*"

55% of respondents said SLG Art Block had a very positive impact on their wider career opportunities, and 36% reported it as having a slightly positive impact. One person reported no impact, and one reported a slightly negative impact. The latter respondent provided broadly positive feedback elsewhere, although they also raised concerns about contractual arrangements. A Communities & Learning Assistant described a concrete case of career progression: their experience at SLG Art Block "*directly contributed to my career progression as an Engagement Producer in a separate employment position at another gallery*". Others described more informal networking: a staff member cited "*the community around SLG and networking within SLG*," and a creative practitioner said SLG Art Block "*gave an invaluable opportunity to connect my participation in [exhibition name] within its closest community... I learnt so much from the group, their needs, and their local community context, that will continue to shape my delivery going forward.*"

Where SLG creative practitioners live



"I learnt so much from the group, their needs, and their local community context, that will continue to shape my delivery going forward"

– Creative practitioner reflecting on the impact of SLG Art Block on their career.

FINDING VALUE AT WORK AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Creative practitioners consistently feel valued at SLG Art Block and find meaning in their roles

Creative practitioners reported feeling valued at work (average score: 3.82 out of 5) and said that they found their work to be meaningful (average score: 3.86 out of 5). In an open-text comment, an artist said the team made them feel "*very valued, safe and respected*," and another wrote, "we've really valued the trust given to us by the SLG team". A Communities & Learning Assistant summed it up as "*being part of a creative team who care about the community.*"

Opportunities for improvement: contract stability, collaborative work, and documentation

When asked what could be better about working at SLG Art Block, survey participants raised some practical suggestions. Communities & Learning Assistants raised contract stability as an issue, with one asking for "*not having zero-hour contracts*" while another requested a "*more consistent rota system so relationships we build don't get lost because of lack of shifts and therefore contact time*". Some assistants have contracts to work on specific sessions each week and some have zero hours contracts. SLG Art Block has recently changed their rota system to allow for clearer shift allocation.

A Communities & Learning Assistant also asked to be "*provided a brief of what the artists were doing before we came in, just to be prepared*", although SLG Art Block usually try not to give staff additional reading or tasks outside of their paid shifts.

Visiting artists suggested better documentation of the sessions they delivered to support their portfolios. One simply requested "*more documentation of the sessions.*" Another was more specific about what was missing: "*It would have been great for me as a freelance artist facilitator to get good photo documentation of the project so I could add it to my portfolio... the photos I got given were lacking of content or much interest and they're not of a portfolio standard*". In response to this, SLG Art Block have planned a photography workshop for staff in November to upskill in this area. Artists also asked for more repeat or collaborative work: one wanted "*room for collaboration between facilitators to co-deliver projects, helping practitioners to expand their network*," and another asked for "*more opportunities for follow up engagement, either through longer term involvement or repeat sessions.*" This request for multiple sessions exploring their practice or medium in greater depth is an interesting contrast to the perspectives of children and young people who expressed an interest in a greater variety of activities. This highlights a potential consideration for future programme design to balance young people's desire for breadth and variety with artists' interests in depth and continuity.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this evaluation found that SLG Art Block provides a space where children and young people feel safe, supported and able to be themselves. Children and young people consistently described building friendships, feeling included and developing confidence. These findings were corroborated across multiple data sources from multiple stakeholders, including parents and staff.

One of the clearest findings was the importance of the relationships with staff, and the sense of trust and safety surrounding SLG Art Block. Parents/carers described having "*peace of mind*" when their children are at SLG Art Block and spoke about the care that extended to them as individuals as well as their children. The culture of trust and care at SLG Art Block is not coincidental; safeguarding and inclusion were described as central priorities by staff, suggesting this culture is actively embedded in how SLG Art Block is run. Taken together, strong relationships and the safe environment at SLG Art Block are fundamental to children and young people's experiences of the programme.

Quantitative findings were also positive. Children and young people's self-reported wellbeing was considerably higher than the national benchmark where comparable and remained consistently high across the two timepoints, albeit with a small decline. Benefits extended beyond participants: parents/carers reported reduced time pressures and stress, while creative practitioners described professional development benefits.

The evaluation also identified some areas where practice could be strengthened. Staff reported high job satisfaction but also wanted greater consistency in contracting and rota planning. There were also different priorities for the future creative offer: children and young people wanted a greater variety of activities, while practitioners wanted more opportunities to explore their artistic practices in greater depth. This presents an important balance for SLG Art Block to consider in future programme planning.

Importantly, the capacity challenges identified in this evaluation reflect the level of demand for SLG Art Block. Creating greater capacity would enable more children and young people to access a space they clearly value, while protecting the relationships, trust and care that sit at the heart of this programme.

APPENDIX

(i) *Theory of Change*

SLG Art Block's *Theory of Change* is shown below, summarising the provision's inputs, short-term and long-term goals and overall aims, as well as identifying the barriers to success.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO CHANGE?	HOW ARE WE MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN?	SHORT-TERM GOALS	LONG-TERM GOALS	OVERALL AIM	BARRIERS
In SE5, children and young people (CYP*) have limited access to safe, affordable spaces, equipment and opportunities for art and play. This restricts creative development and aspirations. **Similarly, increasing social and economic pressures are leading to worsening mental health for CYP and their parents and carers.** **There are limited paid opportunities for socially engaged creative practitioners to test ideas in a supportive, flexible environment.**	1. A wellbeing-aligned arts provision in a safe, non-school environment that provides connection with peers and support from trusted adults. 2. An outlet for youth-led creativity, with professional guidance, dedicated space and high-quality arts materials. 3. Free childcare for parents and carers within the Sceaux Gardens Estate and surrounding areas. 4. Opportunity for creative practitioners to develop and showcase their practise.	CYP demonstrate improved social and emotional skills CYP have increased understanding of, and confidence with, artistic processes/ materials Childcare pressures on local parents and carers are reduced Creative practitioners receive paid, fair opportunities for professional development	CYP feel confident about their future and achieving their goals CYP are more comfortable expressing their opinions, interests and identities Greater levels of wellbeing amongst CYP, parents and carers Creative practitioners have broader career opportunities	**CYP attending SLG Art Block are:** 1. Happy 2. Confident 3. Creatively fulfilled 4. Have a strong sense of self 5. Have strengthened relationships with friends and family **Local parents and carers have better support, improved wellbeing.** **Creative practitioners develop skills, confidence, and experience in socially engaged projects.**	Lack of adjacent arts provision in mainstream education Staffing issues preventing consistent provision Structural disadvantage and cost of living discourages CYP from art & creativity Local pushback and complaints re: noise and/ or 'mess' Lack of support/ respect for art from parents and caregivers

(ii) Survey tools for children and young people

Most children and young people completed the *Short-Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey (S-WEMWBS)*, validated for use with secondary school pupils (Clark A et al, 2021).

For each statement, please pick the option that best describes how you have felt over the last two weeks between 1: None of the time and 5: All of the time.

1. I've been feeling optimistic (positive) about the future.
2. I've been feeling useful.
3. I've been feeling relaxed.
4. I've been dealing with problems well.
5. I've been thinking clearly.
6. I've been feeling close to other people.
7. I've been able to make up my own mind about things.

Additional custom questions, all *Likert* scale (1 – Not at all, 5 – Very much):

1. How much do you enjoy your time at SLG Art Block?
2. When you are at SLG Art Block how happy do you feel?
3. How much do you feel like you belong or feel part of the SLG Art Block community?
4. How much does SLG Art Block help you feel able to try new things?

Children and young people with SEND, lower reading ages, or those under 10 years old completed the *#BeeWell Symbol Survey*, co-founded by the University of Manchester, The Gregson Family Foundation and Anna Freud in 2019.

Additional custom questions:

1. How do you feel when you are at SLG Art Block? (Happy/Ok/Sad)
2. How do you feel about the people at SLG Art Block? (Happy/Ok/Sad)
3. How do you feel about the activities at SLG Art Block? (Happy/Ok/Sad)

Wellbeing (BeeWell Survey Modified Scale)

Item	Response Format
How do you feel about your family?	Choose one: Happy Ok Sad
How do you feel about your friends?	Choose one: Happy Ok Sad
How do you feel about your future?	Choose one: Happy Ok Sad
How do you feel about your school?	Choose one: Happy Ok Sad

(iii) Survey tool for parents/carers

Parents/carers completed a custom survey about their own experiences and their perceptions of their children's experiences at SLG Art Block. The questions are below:

1. Thinking about your child's participation in SLG Art Block, how (if at all) has it impacted your time management? (*Likert* scale 1-5: It has made managing my time much more difficult to It has made managing my time much easier)
2. To what extent do you consider SLG Art Block when making childcare arrangements? (Likert scale 1-3: It is not part of my childcare arrangements to It is a major part of my childcare arrangements)
3. Overall, how has your child's attendance at SLG Art Block affected your own stress levels? (Likert scale 1-5: I feel much more stressed to I feel much less stressed)
4. How has SLG Art Block changed how connected you feel to other families in your local community? (Likert scale 1-5: I feel much less connected to I feel much more connected)
5. Have you interacted with other parents or carers through SLG Art Block? (Drop-down options)
6. I feel welcome at SLG Art Block. (Likert scale 1-5: Strongly disagree to Strongly agree)
7. I would recommend SLG Art Block to other families. (Likert scale 1-5: Strongly disagree to Strongly agree)
8. What has been the most positive thing about SLG Art Block for you or your child? (Open text)
9. Is there anything you would change or improve? (Open text)
10. Do you have any other comments or feedback to share with us? (Open text)
11. How long has your child attended SLG Art Block? (Drop-down options)
12. How often does your child usually go to SLG Art Block? (Drop-down options)
13. Are you aware of any children or young people who no longer attend SLG Art Block, such as a neighbour's child or an older sibling? (Drop-down options)

(iv) Survey tool for creative practitioners

Creative practitioners completed a custom survey about their experiences at SLG Art Block. The questions are below:

1. How would you describe your role at SLG? (Drop-down options)
2. What is/was your understanding of the brief/your role? (Open text)
3. What is/was the most important aspect of your role for children/ young people at SLG? (Open text)
4. What impact has working at SLG had on your professional development? (Likert scale 1-5: A very negative impact to A very positive impact, or I don't know)
5. What impact has working at SLG had on your wider career opportunities? (Likert scale 1-5: A very negative impact to A very positive impact, or I don't know)
6. My work at SLG has helped me develop new skills or approaches in my creative practice. (Likert scale: 0 (Strongly disagree) - 4 (Strongly agree)
7. I feel that the work I do at SLG is meaningful. (Likert scale: 0 (Strongly disagree) - 4 (Strongly agree)
8. Working at SLG has helped me build professional connections or networks. (Likert scale: 0 (Strongly disagree) - 4 (Strongly agree)
9. I feel valued as a creative practitioner or staff member when working with SLG. (Likert scale: 0 (Strongly disagree) - 4 (Strongly agree)
10. What has been most valuable about working with SLG? (Open text)
11. Is there anything that could better support creative practitioners working with SLG? (Open text)
12. Where do you live? (Drop-down options)
13. Which of the following best describes your gender? (Drop-down options)
14. How would you describe your ethnicity? (Drop-down options)

CREDITS

This report was written by Ciara Sims for ImpactEd Group. ImpactEd Group supports education and purpose-driven organisations to be more impactful and sustainable. Through its two specialist practices, ImpactEd Consulting and ImpactEd Evaluation, ImpactEd enables schools, colleges, universities, edtechs, education charities and government departments, to do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

ImpactEd Evaluation

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Bukhman Foundation

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Southwark Council


SLG