

October to
November 2023

Evaluation Report – Women in Recovery & Empowerment (WIRE) pilot project



Figure 1: Lanterns made by the women in session 5, supported by artist Jane Gower



Dr Sue Robson, PhD, MA, BA
Evaluator, Tina's Haven
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1. Introduction

This is an evaluation of an 8-week volunteering pilot project that took place at The Barn at Easington with women in addiction recovery from Addictions North East.

- ✔ The Barn at Easington (“The Barn”) nestles in a rewilded 30-acre farm on the East Durham coast bordering the ancient woodlands of Hawthorn Dene. The Barn specialises in nature-based creative and restorative projects for the local community and beyond.¹
- ✔ Addictions North East (A-NE) is a registered charity providing supported housing and recovery support to women and men suffering addiction. A-NE provide learning support and group-work towards the 12-Steps to addiction recovery.^{2 3}

The “Women in Empowerment & Recovery” (WIRE) pilot project offered opportunities to grow, harvest and cook food, as well as learning traditional seasonal crafts, chutney making and preserving. The project name “WIRE” was defined by the women themselves. The project was funded with a grant of £5,000 from East Durham Community Trust (EDCT), deriving from the government’s “Know Your Neighbourhood Fund”, which is designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness.⁴

Dr Sue Robson, the evaluator, has 38 years feminist community development experience with marginalised women and girls. Sue has an extensive track-record in evaluation and research, including a doctorate in Applied Social Science from Durham University awarded in 2016. Sue founded Tina’s Haven, a catalyst for developing holistic support services for mothers severed from trauma-based addiction, in memory of her daughter. Tina’s Haven is an intervention that aims to ensure women are offered the right support, at the right time, in the right place; and to enable women to have agency, safety and make meaning of their lives in a place free from harm and blame.

2. Background and outline of the project

The WIRE volunteering pilot project came about as a result of a year-long Tina’s Haven pilot project that ended in September 2023. This work included a 4-week “Field of Hope” project in winter 2022, based at The Barn and funded by East Durham Creates.⁵ The learning and outcomes that emerged from an extensive participatory evaluation of the Tina’s Haven project, subsequently shaped the design of the WIRE volunteering project. In summary, these recommendations were:

- ✓ There must be open and flowing lines of communication between practitioners and managers involved in different aspects of the project.
- ✓ The nature-based sessions need to be longer, so the women don’t feel rushed.
- ✓ The sessions should include lunch, and the agreed times adhered to by partner organisations.
- ✓ For those in early addiction recovery, there should be a gentler approach, this could be using the back room at The Barn where there is a fire.

In the WIRE volunteering project, women in recovery were supported by highly experienced trauma-responsive artists and growers from The Barn at Easington.

The project took place over eight three-hour sessions, from 4th October to 22nd November 2023. The schedule and activities involved in each of the sessions is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Schedule and activities involved in eight WIRE volunteering sessions at The Barn at Easington

Session number	Date/ time	Theme
One	4 th October 2023, 10 am to 1pm	We dug up potatoes planted by Sheelagh in the spring and made Broccoli and cheese soup. The women also cleared away growth around our apple trees. The thought for today was thinking about self-care and what we need to weed out of our lives to help ourselves grow!!
Two	11 th October 2023, 10 am to 1pm	We fed the fruit trees with compost, sang, thought about what feeds our soul and took part in a guided meditation.
Three	18 th October 2023, 10 am to 1pm	We planted tulips and daffodils to come up in spring. We wrote a message to ourselves on paper and planted it in the soil to grow recovery and hope for our futures. We made beetroot soup and cleared the bank of brambles and bind weed.
Four	25 th October 2023, 10 am to 1pm	We made vegetable broth from the garden, carved pumpkins and talked about the importance of tapping in to people past and present who root us in strength by their love and kindness.
Five	1 st November 2023, 10 am to 1pm	We made lanterns that represented our Celtic tree sign with the lantern maker Jane Gower to celebrate All Saints Day and the Celtic festival of Samhain!
Six	8 th November 2023, 10 am to 1pm	We cleared out the poly tunnel, picked the green tomatoes and made chutney for Christmas. We tended the soil and fed it with manure in preparation for planting broad beans. We thought about the importance of feeding ourselves both physically and spiritually so we can nurture new growth and healing.
Seven	15 th November 2023, 10 am to 1pm	The Winter sun made picking rose hips for our rose hip syrup a joy today. We made damson jam from damsons, wild plums picked in the summer and frozen. We shared stories about our lives, the hardships, and the path to recovery. Transforming the hard unpalatable rose hips into a concentrated vitamin C rich tonic felt like a metaphor for the transformations happening in our lives.
Eight	22 nd November 2023, 10 am to 1.15pm	We made chicken and rice soup a combined recipe made by two of the women's mothers! We gathered holy, ivy and winter greenery to make Christmas table decorations. Followed by a short evaluation focus group.

3. Methods and data collection

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation data was collected from the following sources:

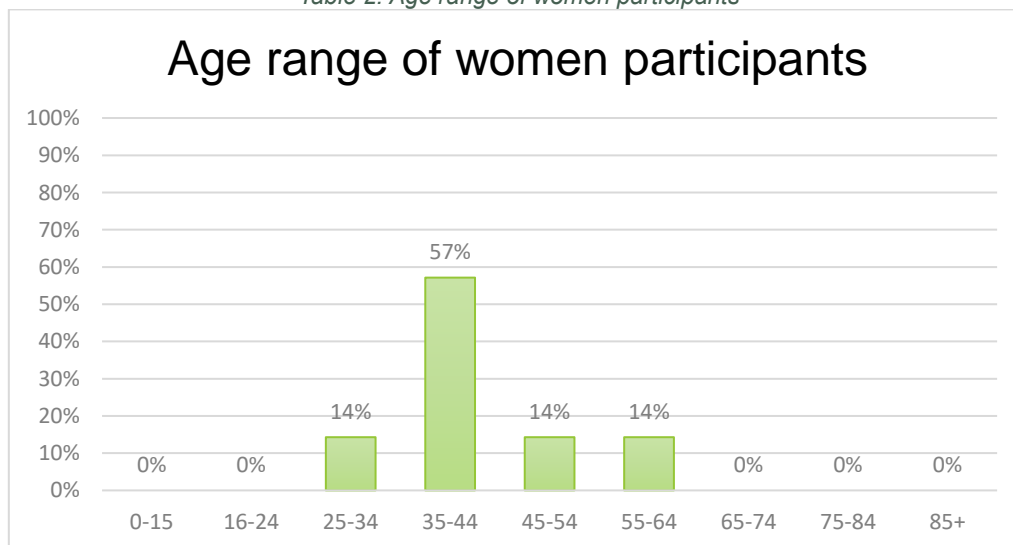
- ✔ “Know your neighbourhood” baseline survey requested by EDCT (70%, n=7 completed).
- ✔ Weekly end of sessions reflection sheets (95%, n=35 completed) to record:
 - What do you want to SAY about the session?
 - What will you TAKE AWAY from the session?
 - What are YOUR DREAMS from the session?
 - What do you want to BIN from the session?
- ✔ A collective reflective journal for project participants, artists, and growers.
- ✔ An end of project online survey (70%, n=7 completed), to record outcomes against:
 - healing and recovery
 - experiences of women only space
 - self-empowerment and development
- ✔ A short focus group for women participants on 22nd November to ratify the findings of the end of project survey (with 40%, n=4 of project participants)
- ✔ A semi-structured interview with the volunteer co-ordinator from A-NE on 24th November 2023.
- ✔ Informal discussions with the artists and growers at The Barn at Easington throughout the project.

4. Project participation and profile of participants

Ten women in addictions recovery at A-NE participated in the project. Of these, 70% (n=7) were known to be birthmothers severed from their children.

Based upon baseline survey response of 70% (n=7) of participants, the women’s ages ranged from 25-24 (14%. n=1) to 55-64 (14%. n=1). The majority of participants (57%, n=4) were aged between 35-44, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Age range of women participants



Research published in July 2023 calculates that women in the North of East England are 1.7 times as likely to die early “as a result of suicide, addiction or domestic murder than women living in England and Wales as a whole.”⁶ The research, conducted by Agenda Alliance and Changing Lives calculates that women who are marginalised and vulnerable are dying at an increased rate and a younger age.⁷

We know from evaluation of the Tina’s Haven pilot project that a woman’s likelihood of abusing alcohol and other drugs increases drastically with a history of being sexually, physically, and emotionally abused; with women suffering addictions having been abused by more perpetrators, more frequently, and for longer periods of time than their non-addicted counterparts (Covington 2007). Moreover, violence, and abuse, are highly gendered, with males more likely to be harmed by enemies or strangers, and women more likely to be harmed by intimate partners (Covington 2012). Those who were birthmothers severed from children in the Tina’s Haven project, had suffered prolonged and systematic domestic and sexual violence from a family member and/ or an intimate partner, for a majority, this had been endemic in their lives since childhood (Robson 2023). The women’s biographies in the Tina’s Haven pilot project revealed a predictably familiar pattern with the narratives of those involved in a parallel study by REFORM and Fulfilling Lives (Van Zyl, et. al. 2022).

Based upon a baseline survey response of 70% (n=7) of participants, an estimated 100% of the participants in the WIRE volunteering project had “physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more”; of these:

- ✔ 71% (n=5) stated that their condition(s) or illness(es) reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a little.
- ✔ 14% (n=1) stated that their condition(s) or illness(es) reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a lot.

Of the 85% (n=6) who stated that they had “physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more”:

- ✔ 100% (n=6) stated “mental health.”
- ✔ 17% (n=1) stated “memory” problems.
- ✔ 17% (n=1) stated a neurodiverse condition.
- ✔ 17% (n=1) stated dyslexia.

In the baseline survey at the start of the project, we asked the women about companionship and isolation. Women were asked to score these categories out of 3, as follows; “Hardly ever or never” = 3, “Some of the time” = 2, “Often” = 1. As illustrated in Figure 1 (next page):

- ✔ Whilst the women only felt Isolated from others “some of the time (2);
- ✔ the score was slightly lower for lacking companionship (1.83);
- ✔ and in relation to “feeling left out” the scores were between “some of the time” and often” (1.43)

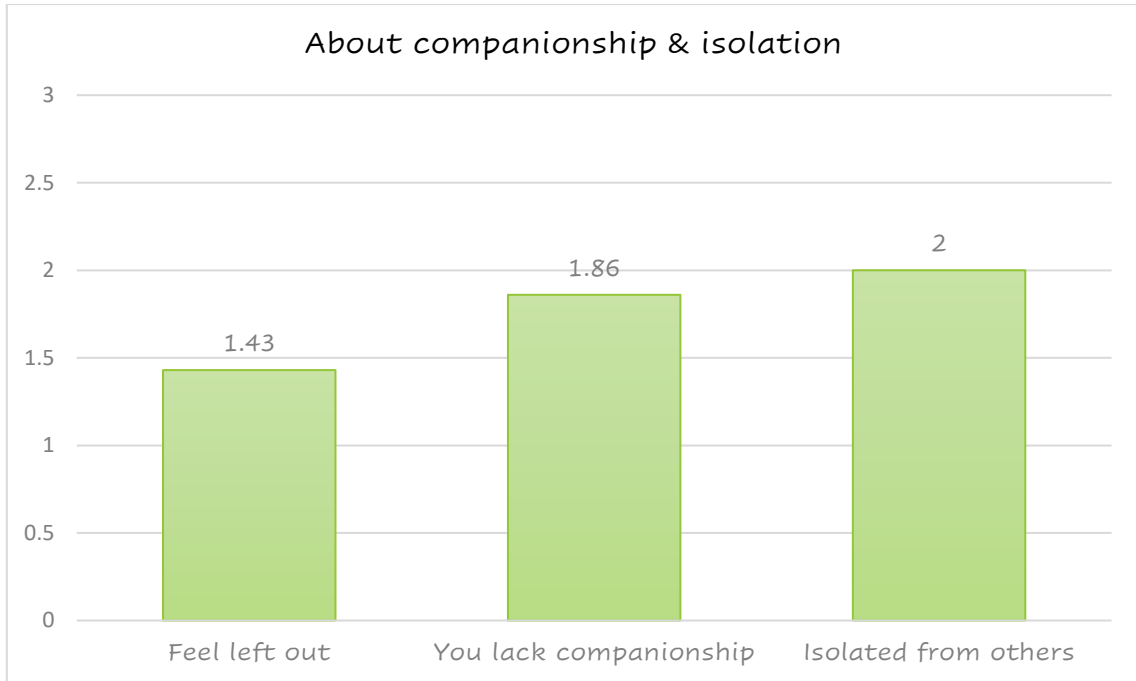


Figure 2: Baseline scores about women participants assessment of companionship and isolation.

Based upon baseline survey response of 70% (n=7) of participants:

- 🍃 71% (n=5) of the women said that they felt lonely “some of the time.”
- 🍃 14% (n=1) said that they felt lonely “often always.”
- 🍃 14% (n=1) said that they felt lonely “occasionally.”

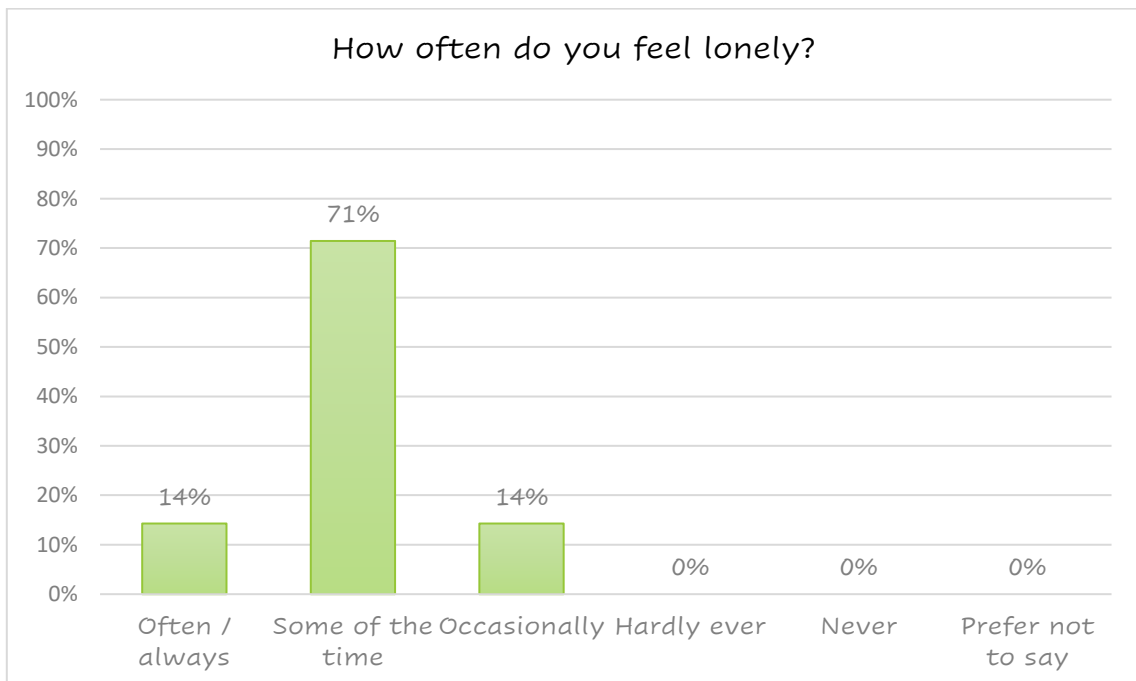


Figure 3: Participants baseline assessment of how often they feel lonely.



Figure 4: Women sharing lunch at the first WIRE volunteering session 4.10.2023.



Figure 5: Rewilding the land at the second volunteering session, 11.10.2023.

5. Findings

Based upon the baseline survey response of 70% (n=7) of participants, 43% (n=3) of the project participants had not volunteered before.

In the baseline survey at the start of the pilot WIRE volunteering project, the women were asked what they hoped to benefit from being involved. The responses were as follows:

- ✓ *Being around women.*
- ✓ *Gaining trust and confidence.*
- ✓ *I'm enjoying volunteering. I've been coming to The Barn for nearly a year now. I'm now helping to co-ordinate the other women in the project to volunteer.*
- ✓ *Learning new skills, connecting with other women, being outdoors.*
- ✓ *Meeting new women and gathering new ideas.*
- ✓ *Working with others who are struggling.*

5.1 Outputs

Once the women signed up to the volunteering project via A-NE there was a “mandatory” requirement for them to attend for the full eight weeks as part of their recovery programme, unless they had a valid excuse for non-attendance.

Out of a possible 100% (n=74), the level of participation was 64% (n=47). The detailed breakdown by participant is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants evaluation in the WIRE volunteering pilot project.

Name	WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4	WK 5	WK 6	WK 7	WK 8	Total
S1 ¹	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100% (n=8)
J1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		88% (n=7)
S2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	88% (n=7)
K1		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	88% (n=7)
T ²	✓	✓	✓		✓				80% (n=4)
C1	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	63% (n=5)
C2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		63% (n=5)
S3	✓					✓		✓	38% (n=3)
K2 ³		✓							20% (n=1)
J2		✓							13% (n=1)
Total sessions	6	7	6	5	6	7	6	4	47

¹ Volunteer co-ordinator

² Left the project due to her supported accommodation tenancy being terminated.

³ As FN 2

5.2 Outcomes

5.2.1 Findings from weekly end of session reflection sheets

At the end of each of the volunteering sessions the women were asked to complete a reflection sheet to record what they wanted “to say” about the session, what they would “take away,” what their “dreams” were, and what they wanted “to bin.”

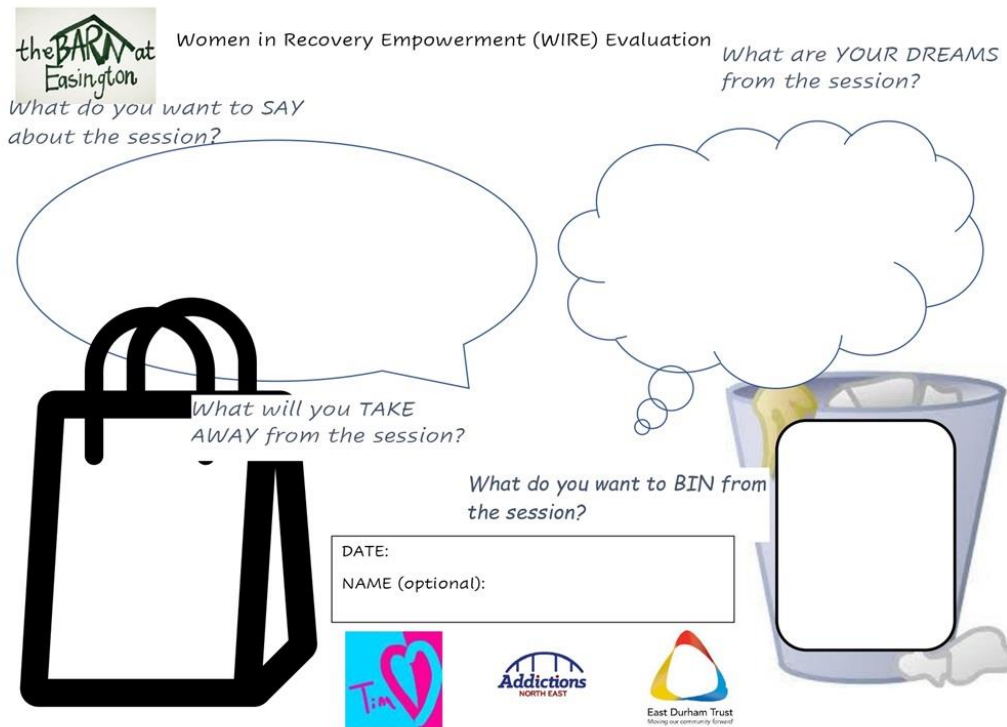


Figure 6: Weekly end of session reflection sheet

The combined responses to “What do you want to SAY about the session?” illustrate that the women consistently had high levels of enjoyment from the volunteering sessions. Women used words such as “amazing” and “fantastic” to describe the sessions, and there was also a significant emotional (but positive) element for them.

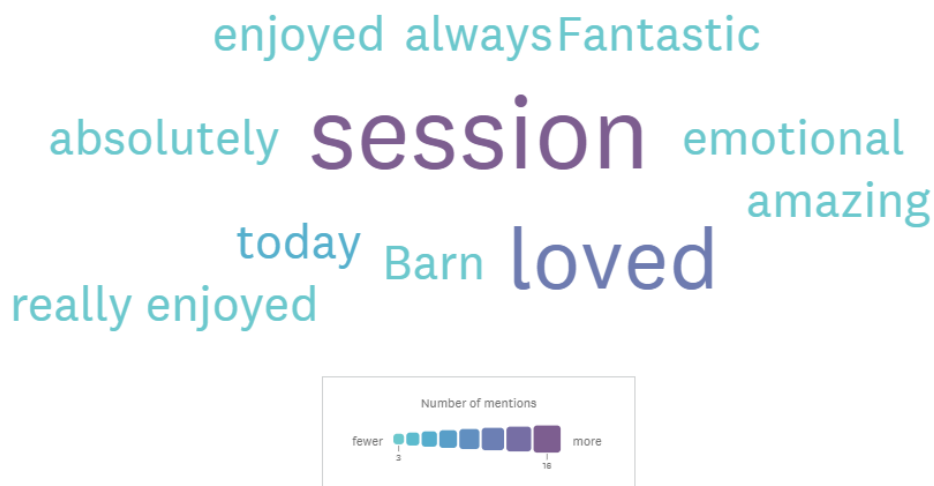


Figure 7: Word cloud illustrating combined narrative responses to “What do you want to Say about the session?”

The following selection of narrative responses exemplify that as well as enjoying the wide range of activities in the volunteering sessions, the women found them therapeutic and derived a great deal of emotional support. There is evidence in the narrative comments that shows this was healing for the women and strengthened their recovery.

- ✔ *A very comforting and empowering session*
- ✔ *Absolutely fantastic session. Loved meditating in the woods. Lifted my mood as I have been feeling down.*
- ✔ *Amazing session, connected and very emotional (in a good way)*
- ✔ *I absolutely loved this session today, so therapeutic.*
- ✔ *I have enjoyed today's session, although I have been feeling quite emotional. But I had a lovely chat with Jeannie and Nicola which helped.*
- ✔ *Loved today's session. It was emotional, happy emotional. I loved the singing and the participation in the preparing of the chutney.*
- ✔ *The session today provided me with peace and tranquillity, and those sessions are paramount in enabling my recovery.*
- ✔ *These sessions are unbelievable.*
- ✔ *Today was very personal and healing.*
- ✔ *Was absolutely amazing. Really therapeutic and relaxing, I really enjoyed it.*

The combined responses to “What will you TAKE AWAY from the session? illustrate that the women consistently derived a high level of peace from the volunteering sessions. Alongside this feeling of peace, was a sense of “love” and “connection” and the promotion of “self-care.”



Figure 8: Word cloud illustrating combined narrative responses to “What will you TAKE AWAY from the session?”

The following selection of narrative responses exemplify that as well as practical skills learnt in the volunteering sessions; the women also took away strength, positive energy, and connection. There is evidence in the narrative comments that the sessions strengthened togetherness, trust, and friendship between the women.

- ✔ *I'll take strength away*
- ✔ *Positive energy*
- ✔ *Serenity (2)*
- ✔ *The togetherness as a group*
- ✔ *Friendship (2)*
- ✔ *Trust and openness in sharing with each other*

The narrative comments about the volunteer sessions evidence that the women made “some wonderful memories” with each other. The sessions also sparked positive childhood memories for the women. The practical activities, such as from garden to table provided immediate outcomes for women and built their self-esteem.

“At The Barn, the women can see the immediate outcome from doing something, and this builds their self-esteem. The traditional activities trigger memories of childhood/ things they did with their mothers and grandmothers that are good memories to be reminded of.”

Volunteer Co-ordinator, 24.11.2023

The themes of “love”, “self-love” and “peace” are replicated in the collective narrative response to the question “What are YOUR DREAMS from the session? Also, the narrative responses express dreams of being “content” and in “harmony.”

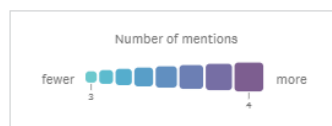


Figure 9: Word cloud illustrating combined narrative responses to “What are YOUR DREAMS from the session?”

The following selection of narrative responses express that the women dream of having stronger and more powerful connections with nature, with themselves and their creativity, and with each other. Another overarching theme is to have more volunteering sessions at The Barn.

- ✔ *Connection with women in recovery, empowering each other.*
- ✔ *My dreams are to become at one with nature, and to connect with nature and my spiritual side.*
- ✔ *To become more creative and get more creative things done (2).*
- ✔ *To build confidence (3) and self-love.*
- ✔ *To come to more sessions (3)*

The participants hopes and dreams are corroborated in the findings from the end of project online survey, whereby a central theme is for expanded volunteering opportunities at The Barn, for both the existing women and new women coming into recovery.

- ✔ *I hope that women in recovery, have the same experience I had there, it is a truly remarkable place.*
- ✔ *To continue to grow and heal.*
- ✔ *To get together and celebrate recovery and to do some more volunteering.*
- ✔ *My Hopes are to be able to do more activities at The Barn.*
- ✔ *Work with women in recovery.*
- ✔ *I would like to start volunteering to help with other projects next year at The Barn.*



Figure 10: Pumpkins carved for Halloween at the fourth volunteering session, 25.10.2023

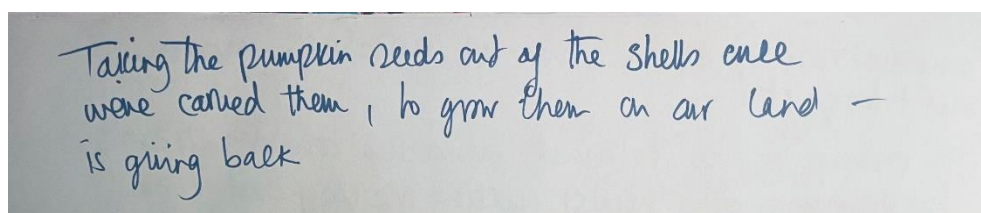


Figure 11: Narrative journal entry, giving the pumpkin seeds back to the land

The following word cloud of the combined narrative responses to “What would you like to BIN from the sessions”, speaks for itself!

Nothing^N

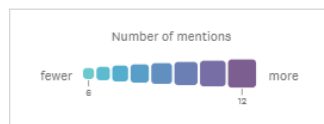


Figure 12: Word cloud of combined narrative responses to “What would you like to BIN from the session?”

This finding is corroborated in the end of project online survey where the almost unanimous response was that nothing needed to change and “*everything is perfect.*” The only exception was that the volunteering sessions should be full days. This is corroborated in the narrative from the volunteer co-ordinator interview (24.11.23).

“It is a lovely environment at The Barn, it is emotional, but we do some lovely stuff. But at present the women have to go straight back into groups at A-NE at 1.30pm. So, you find the peace, but then lose what you have gained in the morning.”



Figure 13: Soup made from carved pumpkins and vegetables harvested during the same session.

5.2.2 Findings from end of project online surveys

After the seventh WIRE volunteering session the women were asked to complete an online survey with three sets of six statements relating to the following themes:

- My healing and recovery.
- My experiences of women only spaces.
- My self-development and empowerment.

The women were asked to score each statement from 0 to 3 with “3” being the strongest level of agreement and “0” being the lowest level.



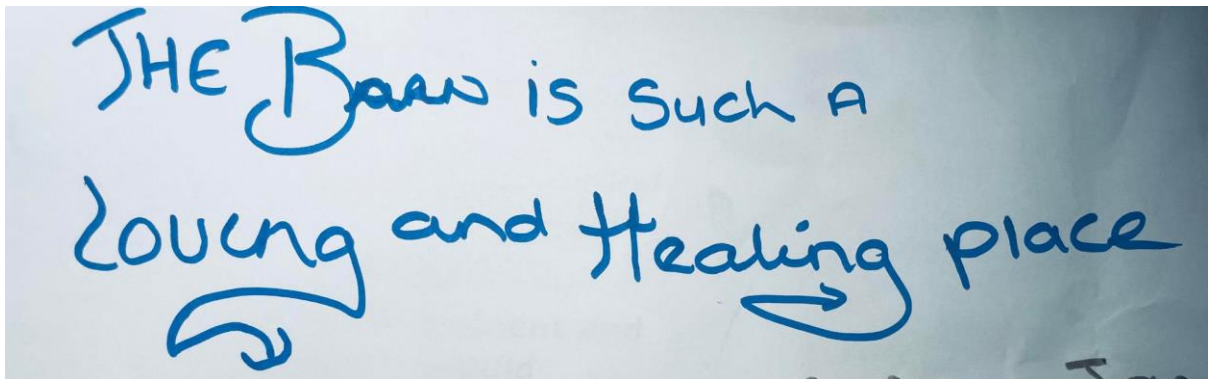
Figure 14: Combined responses to end of project survey in relation to healing & recovery themed statements

As shown in the figure above there was almost universal strong agreement (2.98) among the 70% (n=7) participants who completed the survey that the project had contributed to their healing and recovery. The only score that was slightly less than strong agreement was in relation to opening up “new opportunities and possibilities” for project participants.

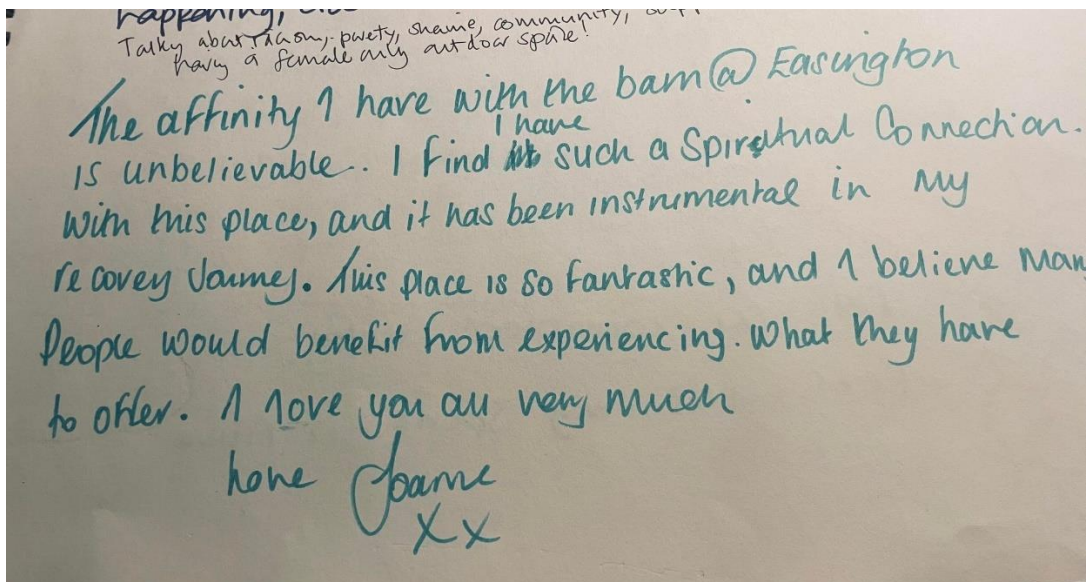
There were six narrative responses in relation to this theme, almost all corroborating that the sessions made a significant contribution to the women’s healing and recovery. The only exception being a request for the sessions to be full days:

- 📌 *The Barn has been instrumental in my recovery journey, I absolutely love attending here, and I will be forever grateful to Nicki, Ellie and Jennie, and the rest of the team.*
- 📌 *I've loved it every minute of it also it's helped my healing and recovery immensely. I've learned a lot and love the women there and will miss it so much. It's compassionate loving and being able to connect with nature is so soothing I found it to be very therapeutic and have huge amounts of love ❤️*
- 📌 *The sessions have helped my recovery and mental health massively. It has also helped my confidence.*

The survey responses in relation to the outcome theme of healing and recovery are corroborated in the narrative responses recorded by the women in the reflective journal that was available throughout the volunteering sessions.

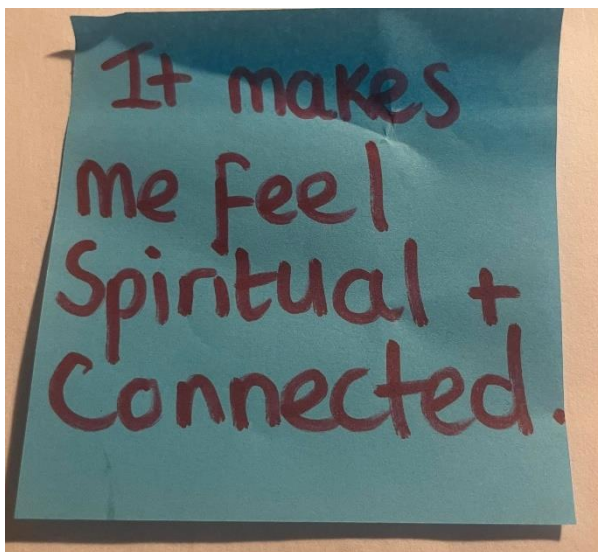


THE Barn is such a
Loung and Healing place

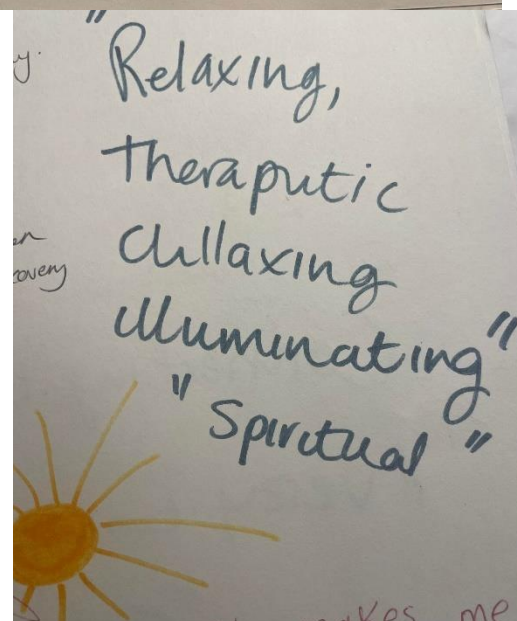


happening, etc.
Talky about trauma, purity, shame, community, etc.
having a female only outdoor space!

The affinity I have with the barn @ Easington
is unbelievable. I find ^{I have} such a Spiritual Connection.
With this place, and it has been instrumental in my
recovery journey. This place is so fantastic, and I believe many
people would benefit from experiencing what they have
to offer. I love you all very much
love Joanne
XX



It makes
me feel
Spiritual +
Connected.



"Relaxing,
therapeutic
chillaxing
illuminating"
"Spiritual"
makes me

Figure 15: Journalled narratives from participants relating to the healing and therapeutic effects of the project

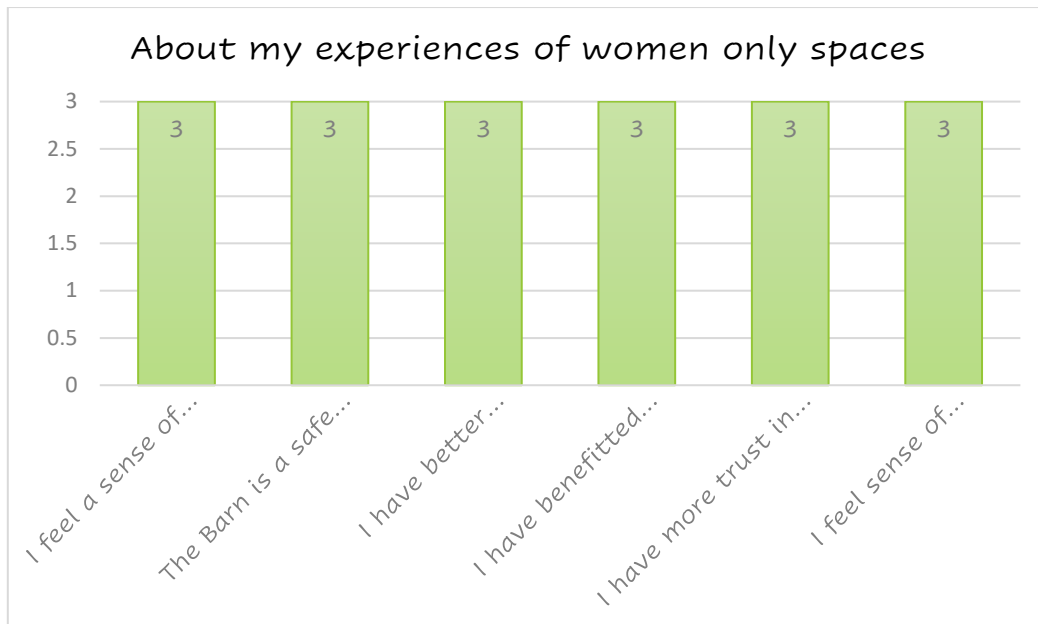


Figure 16: Combined survey responses in relation to positive experiences of women only space statements

As illustrated in the figure above, there was universal strong agreement that the women have positive experiences of women only spaces (maximum score of 3). There were three narrative survey responses against this theme, elaborating the love and connection between the women and the value they place upon a relaxing, therapeutic, and spiritual women only space.

- 📌 *I love the women and adore The Barn it's a relaxing therapeutic spiritual place to be an makes my very core happy.*
- 📌 *Love it. I am able to share openly in the space with other women.*

The value of the women only space at The Barn is corroborated in the following narrative from the volunteer co-ordinator (24.11.2023) and a testimony from focus group participant (on 22.11.23, figure 17).

“For the women, it’s been a good place for them to open up and share with each other. We have dealt with some really emotional stuff, without it being in a mixed group.”

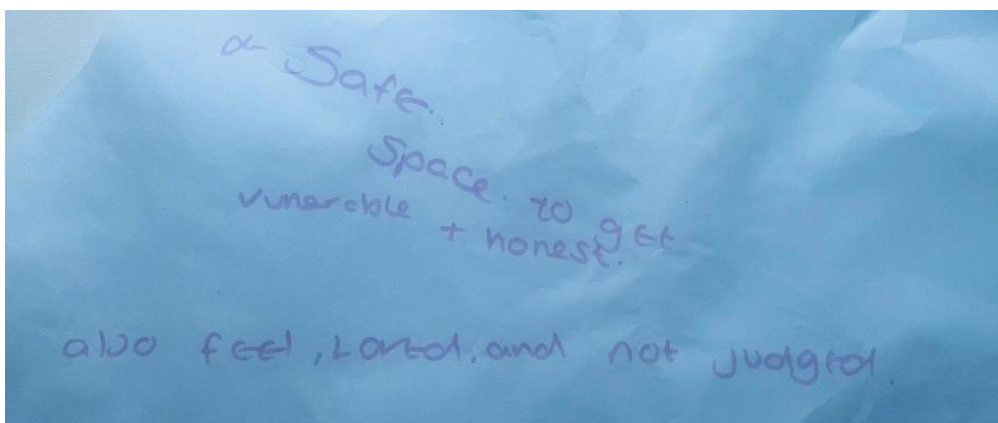


Figure 17: “A safe space to get vulnerable and honest; also feel loved and not judged.”

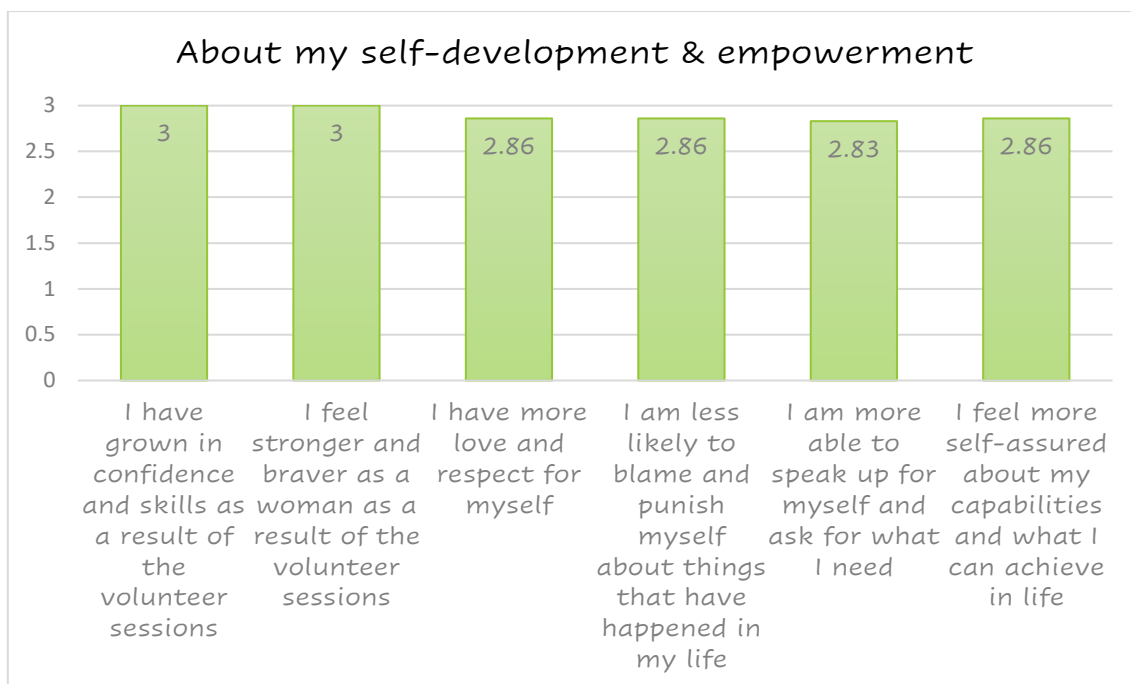



Figure 18: Combined survey responses to self-development & empowerment themed statements

In the end of project online survey, there was slightly lower than strong agreement in relation to the theme of “self-development & empowerment”, with two-thirds of the categories scoring slightly lower (overall score 2.9).

There was only one narrative response against “self-development & empowerment”.

 *I feel empowered, more confident, and stronger. I've been enlightened by learning new things.*

For the volunteer co-ordinator, who was previously involved throughout the previous Tina’s Haven project, including the 12-week psycho-educational, Own My Life Course; the WIRE volunteering project provided an opportunity for her to re-enter a professional environment.⁸ This had been one of her recovery goals.

“I have been able to build my confidence up by working in a professional environment again. If there have been any issues arising within the project, such as problems with the transport/ or issues with the women, I have been able to discuss them with [the project manager and A-NE manager] on an equal professional level.”

In the Tina’s Haven project, where this participant had first taken on a co-ordination role, she had struggled a little to balance her own recovery with “pleasing others.” In this project she said she was far more confident in being able to do this using the structure of the 12-Steps programme; *“going to three meetings a week, engaging with my sponsor, and having a balanced approach to ‘service’”*.

6. Conclusion

The evaluator has witnessed evidence that the key recommendations of the Tina's Haven pilot project both shaped the design of the WIRE volunteering project and were put into practice.

Tina's Haven Recommendation	Actions
There must be open and flowing lines of communication between practitioners and managers involved in different aspects of the project.	A system of regular communication has been set up between the volunteer project manager and the manager of the women's service at A-NE, inclusive of the volunteer co-ordinator.
The nature-based sessions need to be longer, so the women don't feel rushed.	The sessions were extended from two hours, 10am to 12 noon, by one hour until 1pm.
The sessions should include lunch, and the agreed times adhered to by partner organisations.	The women made and shared lunch with each other as an integral part of the volunteering session. The Barn arranged transport to pick-up and drop-off the women at ANE, so things ran better to arranged times.
For those in early addiction recovery, there should be a gentler approach, this could be using the back room at The Barn where there is a fire.	The fire was always on in the back room at The Barn which provided a space for women to sit and quietly have space and reflect if they wanted to.

In relation to the "open and flowing lines of communication between practitioners and managers," this testimony from the volunteer co-ordinator is further endorsement of this practice improvement.

"I am in the meetings with [the two managers] about the project. I am more 'in the loop' than I have been in previous projects. That line of communication is needed if and when issues arise with the women. I am recognised by the A-NE women's project manager as the person who is 'running with' the work with the women at The Barn, because others do not have the capacity to do it. The communication between [the project manager at The Barn] and I, been 'spot on.'"

The evaluation findings evidence that the women consistently derived high levels of enjoyment from the volunteering sessions; they found them "amazing" and "fantastic." The women also found the sessions therapeutic and derived a great deal of emotional support. There is corroborative and compelling evidence across all data sources that the project was healing for the women and strengthened their recovery.

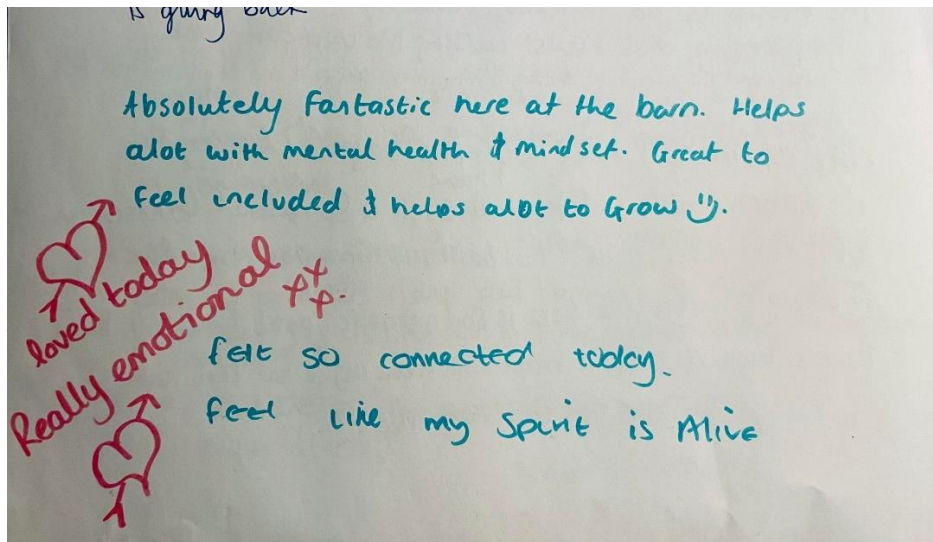


Figure 19: Journal evidence relating to the healing power of the WIRE volunteering sessions.

The evaluation findings evidence that women participants consistently derived a high level of peace from the volunteering session. Alongside this feeling of peace, was a sense of “love” and “connection” and the promotion of “self-care.” Moreover, that women also took away strength from the positive energy, connection and togetherness, trust, and friendship that developed between the women.

The findings evidence that volunteer sessions, particularly the traditional crafts and food preparation also sparked positive childhood memories for the women. The volunteer co-ordinator reflected that these practical activities conducted within one session, such as from garden-to-table, provided immediate outcomes for women and built their self-esteem. This is a highly significant finding in relation to the efficacy of the structure and content of the volunteering sessions.

The evaluation provides universal strong agreement of the women’s positive experiences of women only spaces at The Barn. The narrative responses elaborate the growing of love and connection between the women and the high value placed upon a relaxing, therapeutic, and spiritual women only space.

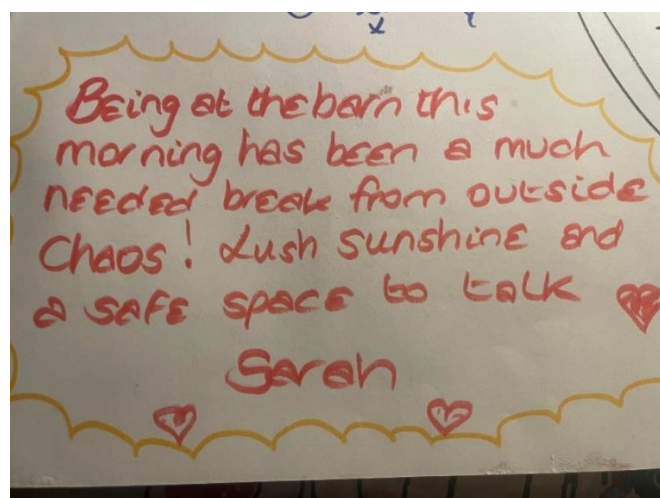


Figure 20: Narrative journal entry from a participant evidencing The Barn sessions as a safe space.

There is less narrative evidence that the project contributed to “self-development & empowerment” among the women. However, in the qualitative assessment by 70% (n=7) of the participants who responded to the survey scored this highly (2.9).








Moving forwards, the women dream of having a stronger and more powerful connection with nature, with themselves and their creativity, and with each other. A central theme is for expanded volunteering opportunities at The Barn, for both the existing women and new women coming into recovery. There is almost a unanimous response from the participants that nothing needs to change and “everything is perfect,” the only exception being for the volunteering session to be full days.



Figure 21: Traditional crafts and preserving in volunteering sessions at The Barn

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been informed by the evaluation findings, the semi-structured interview with the volunteer co-ordinator from A-NE, and informal discussions with the artists and growers at The Barn at Easington.

- 7.1 The combined learning from this volunteering project, and the forerunning Tina's Haven pilot project, should be used to shape and design more ambitious staged model of tried and tested activities to expand women's personal growth, recovery and empowerment through their discovery and connection with the land, each other, and themselves. As follows:
- a) Creating opportunities for women to be deeply connected to nature, through growing and creative activities, working collectively to recover the land.
 - b) Offering a 12-weekly course for women who have been subjected to abuse to regain ownership of their lives.
 - c) Providing learning, supported volunteering opportunities and external training to increase women's potential for meaningful employment.
- 7.3 Future WIRE volunteering sessions at The Barn should be a mix of women in recovery stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 (at A-NE) because this has worked well in the pilot volunteering project.
- It has been suggested during this evaluation that consideration should also be given to volunteering sessions at The Barn being a 'mandatory' part of women's Stage 1 recovery programme (entry level). This would mean that those in stage 1 at the point the sessions started would sign up and it would be mandatory from then.
- 7.4 To maintain and develop open and flowing lines of communication between managers, practitioners, and the volunteer co-ordinator that enable intuitive decisions at all levels of the project. This should include insights into the levels of tailored individual support needed by each of the participants.
- 7.5 The volunteering sessions at The Barn should be full-days to preserve the sense of calm, and "slowing the mind down" that is so beneficial in recovery, especially for women in the first stages of recovery. The sessions should be structured with 1) work, 2) lunch 3) relaxation and finish at 2.30 pm.
- 7.6 Further development/ training could be available to volunteers and artists, growers, and support workers in the following areas:
-  Reiki.
 -  Forest bathing.
 -  Meditation.
 -  Photography.
 -  Gardening, growing and re-wilding.
 -  Herbalism.
 -  Food production and food hygiene.

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Notes

¹ <https://www.thebarnateasington.co.uk/>

² <https://www.addictionsnortheast.com/>

³ The 12 Steps Handout from Addictions North East - <https://www.addictionsnortheast.com/training-with-addictions-north-east/12-steps-programme/>

⁴ In January 2023 the government confirmed the launch of the Know Your Neighbourhood (KYN) Fund, an up-to-£30-million package of funding designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/about-the-know-your-neighbourhood-fund>

⁵ Tina Robson (1885-2020) died age 35 in temporary homeless accommodation having suffered trauma and addiction for many years of her life. Tina left behind her adored son 11-year-old son. A video that celebrated the Field of Hope Project (funded by East Durham Creates), and launched the Tina's Haven pilot project can be found here <https://www.thebarnateasington.co.uk/projects-1>

⁶ Rise in vulnerable women dying early in north-east England, report finds - <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/10/rising-number-vulnerable-women-dying-early-north-east-england-report>, Mark Brown. North of England correspondent, The Guardian. Mon 10 Jul 2023 06.00 BST

⁷ Dismantling Disadvantage, Levelling up public services for women with multiple unmet needs, July 2023 Final Report, Agenda Alliance and Changing Lives, Dismantling Disadvantage - https://www.agendaalliance.org/documents/148/Transforming_Services_Final_Report.pdf

⁸ A 12-week online or in-person course to help women who have been subjected to abuse to regain ownership of their lives. This was piloted from the first time (in-person) in a recovery setting at A-NE as part of the Tina's Haven pilot project <https://www.ownmylifecourse.org/>