



HARLOW PLAYHOUSE

CREATE • ENJOY • FOR ALL

Project Report

The Cloud Hub / I Talk To The Clouds and They Cry
With Me



Background

Harlow Playhouse was successful in their bid for a National Lottery Project Grant, through Arts Council England. The grant was used to provide a weeks' worth of activities supporting and aiming to improve Harlow's Mental Health alongside commissioning award-winning choreographer Rhiannon Faith to create a brand new show I TALK TO THE CLOUDS AND THEY CRY WITH ME.

The Cloud Hub was based in The Harvey Centre and will be open 11 – 8 each day from the 14th May until 18th May hosting a range of activities including – Theatre, Dance, Visual Art, Therapy, Music, Mental Health Workshops, Yoga, Moan for Free, Feelings with Fanny, Mindfulness Mural and a Mental Health Market Place. All Supported by Harlow Playhouse Young Practitioners.

I TALK TO THE CLOUDS AND THEY CRY WITH ME is a beautifully moving and honest dance theatre show about loneliness, forgiveness and friendship. Set within a spectacular and dramatic cloud structure, and based on a true story, two performers tell one man's struggle through illness and suffering, and his desire to live in the sky.

The show shines a light on mental health problems and discusses death, suicide and the suffering we experience through illness.





Associate Artist – Rhiannon Faith

Rhiannon Faith is a socially conscious artist whose work is an agent for discourse and change; she makes form-defying autobiographical shows that have guts, and that take guts.

She is interested in how art changes lives.

Rhiannon Faith's creative process draws autobiographical stories from the communities and artists she works with. The result is work which uses dance and theatre (in their widest meanings) to take the audience on a narrative led journey, which is both challenging and accessible.

Her work often involves a wide range of collaborating partners including a psychologist, a neuroscientist, a domestic abuse charity, and most recently a philosopher on virtue ethics and moral psychology.

Rhiannon Faith is responsible for making Harlow Playhouse the first J9 Venue in the UK, (a sign-posted safe space for victims of Domestic Abuse).

Through the continued working relationship of Harlow Playhouse and Rhiannon Faith we can engage with wider audiences through powerful, brave, strong subject mattered commission **relevant** and **inspiring** to Harlow audiences.

Harlow Playhouses' Director Rory Davies and Rhiannon Faith were successful in securing a Project grant from Arts Council England for £50,000 to run this Project.





MONITORING INFORMATION

Monitoring Point	Count	Percentage of Audience
Project Participants and Audience	421	
Monitoring Information Obtained	267	63.4%
Ethnicity		
White: British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Any other white background	175	65.5%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background	30	11.2%
Asian/Asian British: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Any other Asian Background	9	3.3%
Black/Black British: African, Carribbean, Any other Black Background	7	2.6%
Other: Arab, Any other ethnic background, Not known	31	11.6%
AGE		
0-19	77	28.8%
20-34	70	26.2%
35-49	72	26.9%
50-64	25	9.3%
65+	8	2.9%
Disability Status		
Visible or Invisible Disability	18	6.7%
Not Known	243	91.1%
Gender		
Male	81	30%
Female	177	66.2%
Non-Binary	7	2.6%
Prefer Not to Say	1	0.37%



What our Audiences said about The Cloud Hub

“Suffering from mental illness myself and unemployed. Highly recommend. Wish you could do these workshops every week. Thanks.”

“Laughter Yoga – great fun and feel good factor. Give it a try! Many thanks to Lottie and team.”

“Had a great time meeting new people and getting help with my mental health and learning how to make something new.”

“Dreamcatcher Workshop – Thoroughly enjoyed! Instructor really helpful! Creative and inspirational!”

“The show was amazing, very well thought out. The crafts was a nice chance to speak to others and to take my mind off the day to day problem. Also, my child loved playing and having fun with everyone. Was a nice atmosphere for everyone. I suffer with mental health so I don’t do much like this.”

“Really enjoyed the laughter yoga. Will definitely use some of the techniques that Lottie showed us. Very well organised by the team. Thank you”

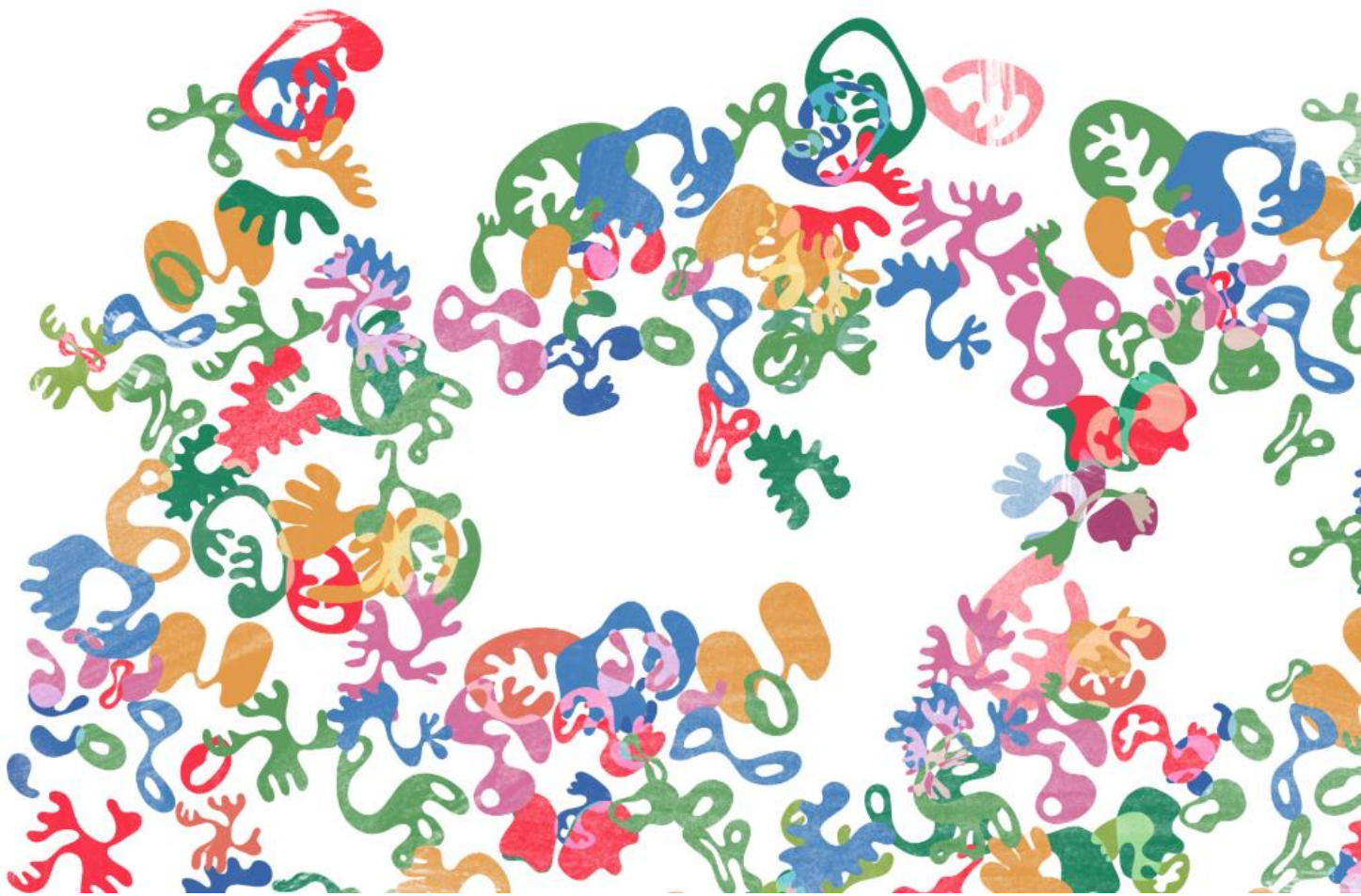
“Had a great chat with Tom & Emily today! Really brighten up my day! Thank you Cloud Hub.”

“All the best! Really enjoyed painting the wall. Good luck”

“This has been really helpful. I’ve learnt great things and had a fabulous time. We need more things like this on a very regular basis! Thank you for this.”

“Really enjoyed it, I could finally open up how I felt and was comfortable. Would defo recommend this coming back to Harlow to help even old people get the help they need and support like I have had today at the Cloud Hub.”

“What can I say? I had an amazing time; I did my own dream catcher (I can make something!) I also did laughter yoga, what I’ve always wanted to do, thank you everyone, for making this an amazing evening.”





What our Audiences said about “I Talk To the Clouds and They Cry With Me”

“Congratulations to the team for putting together this show. Great staging on the roof close to the clouds. It deserves to be seen by many more.”

“A hard hitting and thought provoking show performed beautifully and dealt with sensitivity and understanding. Thank you!”

“Amazing put together show and really showcases the hardship of mental health! Amazing.”

“Beautiful story. Follows all aspects of a depressive episode and lack of support. Well done!”

“Beautifully performed piece from Steve and the Cloud. A hard hitting look at the emotions surrounding the difficult subject of suicide. Hopefully will encourage more people to speak more openly about suicide. Well done.”

“An incredibly thought provoking and moving show. Beautifully performed with grace and emotion.”

“As someone with personal experience of this subject through not only myself but several of my friends, I thought this was beautifully and sensitively portrayed in an accessible and poignant way – very well done to all involved.”

“The performance was very emotive and thought provoking. It highlighted how important it is for everyone to talk and tell others how they feel. It also highlighted that it is just as important for others to check up on people they are concerned about and to encourage them to talk.”

“It was amazing, well performed. Lovely interpretation of an awful subject.”

“Such a powerful thought provoking performance. Sad to hear the statistics and the help that wasn’t available for this guy and pleasing to hear more and can see around more is

now being done to tackle the stigma attached to mental health and get people talking and sharing.”

“I really didn’t know what to expect but it was really hard hitting and emotional. It explained this terrible issue in a very easy to understand way and I am grateful for the opportunity to attend. Thank you for putting this show on.”

“Incredibly powerful piece of theatre. It made you laugh and cry but most importantly it made you think. So important we talk about mental health and recognise the daily struggle of people with depression.”

“Thought moving, emotional and important piece of theatre. I loved it’s honesty and the fact that it put the really important things at its core: love, honesty and memory.”

“Absolutely amazing; makes you really think of how a person must be thinking and feeling. Real eye opener! Highly recommended.”

“Wonderfully expressive and emotional. No frills, mental health being exposed in its true and genuine form. AMAZING – THANK YOU!”





Playhouse Artistic Directors Report

Harlow Playhouse was delighted to receive the funding from Arts Council England for our Cloud project, this project was important to Harlow and connected with over 400 residents across a five day period.

This project showed Harlow Playhouse and Rhiannon Faith using arts as a first line intervention for those that might be struggling with their own mental health or supporting somebody dealing with Mental Health Issues. Harlow Playhouse and Rhiannon Faith have helped to develop this process in which we hope other arts providers around the UK will take up, being able to provide that first line intervention using the correct support mechanisms like “The Cloud Hub” will hopefully relieve pressures and provide a different approach to support some of the National Services. Through the commission our aim was to raise awareness of suicide and depression, reminding audiences that mental health is an illness the same as any other terminal illness.

“The attitudes we hold towards people who attempt to take their lives can influence the course of their condition. The isolation that suicidal people feel can be reinforced by a judgmental approach in which their behaviour is viewed as manipulative or selfish. By stepping beyond our personal assumptions, and showing care and respect for the people behind the behaviours, we can help them share their feelings and help prevent suicide”

The above were the final words our audience heard as they left the roof of the Harvey Centre Car Park and from the feedback we received and my many chats with the audiences we know that the show has helped not only enlighten the audience into some real life experiences of mental health but left them questioning their own behaviours and attitudes towards the conditions.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 20-34 years in the UK we can see from our monitoring information that over 50% of the audiences and participants that provided monitoring information were in this age bracket. Despite that suicide in men in this age range is considerably higher our monitoring information shows that we engaged with 30% of people who identify as male compared to over 60% of audiences and participants identifying as female.

Having Joy our therapist on site gave the audiences, participants, staff and creative team ongoing support through this process. During Joy’s time in “The Cloud Hub” she was able to use her extensive training to provide free support to those in need. Patient confidentiality rules apply to Joy’s practice therefore we can’t be sure of the exact details of the interventions that took place across the week however the common themes discussed were Domestic Violence, Anxiety, Eating Disorders, Depression and Religious based practices causing varying forms of mental illness.

It was clear that many of the people that joined us in the hub were socially isolated or lonely and people frequented the venue on more than one occasion to meet new people and talk about common pressures. On more than one occasion being moved away from abusive partners and being placed into substandard accommodation in the town by London Brough Councils was raised.

The Project cost £87,218.00 for delivery of “I Talk To The Clouds and They Cry With Me”, The Cloud Hub and Inner Armour to provide workshops at Passmores Academy to Essex Police as part of their quarantine training. £25,967.00 of this has come in kind from local partners, with the largest amount of in-kind support coming from The Harvey Centre and Harlow Council. 57.24% of the Project was funded through in – kind support and Arts Council England Investment, This displays the strong links Harlow Playhouse has in the community. Harlow Playhouse invested a commissioning fee of £10,000 used as match funding for this project.

In summary this project has a future and Harlow Playhouse and Rhiannon Faith will be applying for more funding from Arts Council England as well as other sources to deliver a UK tour, putting Harlow as a leading player on the national stage delivering first line interventions through the arts.



Rory Davies
Artistic and Executive Director
Harlow Playhouse





LEGACY

Feedback from audiences along with 1-1 discussions with audiences and participants prove that there is a need for mental health support in Harlow. The Arts practice mental health approach to interventions appears to be a good way to provide this first level intervention. The key approach for successful delivery on this project was ensuring we could keep safe and protect the audiences, participants and staff.

To ensure continuity it's important that not only does the project have a legacy in Harlow but also to ensure the support for our audiences is still there. A group of key players in both the arts and mental health services in the town should be established with a clear vision for the future but will need to be well funded to ensure a safe delivery.

Harlow Playhouse and Rhiannon Faith will be continuing to develop the Cloud Project with other performances and a tour able version of The Cloud Hub planned for 2020.

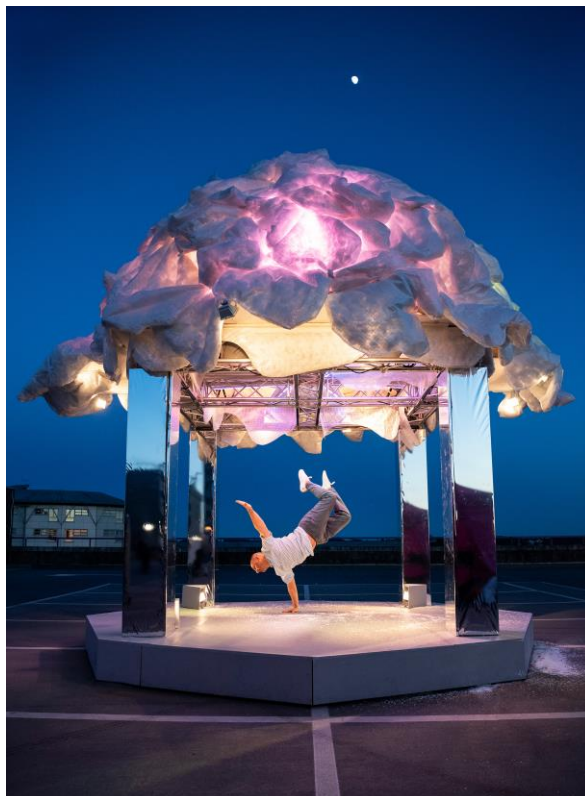
The Table below details some options for continuation of Arts based mental health activities and services continuing in Harlow on a short to long term basis with a low to high scoring based on cost of delivery.

#	Activity	Achievable	Cost Implication
1	Establish a Safe Space/s – These should be community locations that are accessible at a number of different times.	0 – 12 Months	LOW £££
2	Provide adequate Mental Health Training to Staff of Safe Spaces.	0 – 12 Months	LOW £££
3	Provide Trainer Training to key staff in each of the Safe Spaces.	0 – 12 Months	MED ££££
4	Commission Visual Artists to run Art Therapy Sessions with the end goal of creating community art that can be displayed.	0 – 12 Months	MED ££££
5	Commission Performance Artists to deliver performance based therapy and lead sessions supported by Mental Health Practitioners.	0 – 12 Months	MED ££££
6	Create a town wide cohesive plan with SMART objectives to tackling mental health through art as a first intervention.	1-4 Years	LOW £££
7	Undertake a feasibility study for the	5 Years +	HIGH ££££££

	establishment of a 24/7 Mental Health Hub.		
8	Commission a Mental Health Practitioner to engage with people who identify as male under the age of 50 to try and combat the stigma in the age range, with the outcome of improving mental health and trying to prevent suicide.	1-4 Years	MED ££££
9	Regular Mental Health Marketplaces for all in an attempt to reduce and eradicate stigmas surrounding mental health.	1-4 Years	LOW £££

HARLOW





Extract From "I Talk To The Clouds and They Cry With Me"

I cry with you because I love you

I cry with you because I'm sorry. I'm sorry you had to go through this journey, I'm sorry I couldn't fix you, or help you.

I cry with you with compassion and with my arms wrapped around you

I cry with you in your loneliness, your body sitting so far away from anyone else, with space for miles and miles around you, look up and I am here.

I cry with you because of all the beautiful things I see in you, that you don't see. You're kindness, your strength, your love the joy you brought, your beauty.

I cry with you because others may think you are weak, but they didn't see how much you had to fight.

I cry with you because I feel relief, that you are no longer suffering.

I cry because I think of all the other bodies on the land that are suffering.

I cry with you because I miss you, I wanted you to come back so many times.

I cry with you because you deserved more

I cry with you because you never could stand to be alone, and that's OK, that's why I am here.

I cry with you because you taught me how to feel, I feel so much for you, you feel like a part of me.

I cry with you and look at the land from up here knowing that it's a sadder place now you are gone.

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