

RHIANNON FAITH COMPANY & HARLOW PLAYHOUSE PRESENT:



The Care House Project

PROJECT REPORT 2022

The Care House Project

A group of six people are performing a dance or exercise routine inside a light blue and white structure. The structure has a sign that reads "The Care House Project". The people are in various dynamic poses, some with arms raised. The structure has a white interior and a light blue exterior. The roof is made of a white grid structure with translucent panels. The background shows a blue sky with white clouds and green trees.

INTRODUCTION

The Care House Project works with the Harlow community to improve mental health and wellbeing, celebrate care and community, and provide hope for a better future.

The first Care House Project took place in Harlow in Summer 2022. As part of the project we spent 6 weeks with an amazing bunch of people from Harlow who came together to talk about care; living with it and living without it. Together we made a new dance theatre show, *9 Acts of Care*. The project concluded with *A Festival of Care* in Harlow Town Park, bringing together local organisations and community groups in Harlow. The free festival ran for a week and included shows, family friendly activities, music, creative workshops, signposting activity and daily performances of *9 Acts of Care*.

“It has been a privilege to work alongside a group of inspirational and brilliant Harlow residents at Harlow Playhouse, exploring themes around care and community. We were also shining a light on all the fantastic organisations here that contribute to a vision of care for their local people. The Care House Project this summer was joyous, and we look forward to making this an annual event for Harlow. Together we can creatively dismantle barriers that exclude and encourage belonging and care for all” Rhiannon Faith, Artistic Director.

The Care House Project is co-produced by Rhiannon Faith Company and Harlow Playhouse, with support from Harlow Poverty Alliance. The project is funded using public funding by Arts Council England, National Lottery Community Fund, and The Essex County Council Arts and Cultural fund. With development support from Stafford Gatehouse Theatre.



CARE WORKSHOPS

As part of the project we delivered **Care Workshops**, 6 free creative workshops to explore the themes of loneliness and isolation using dance and creative writing. After each workshop we hosted a 'care cafe', an opportunity to socialise and discuss mental health over a cup of tea, supported by our counsellor, Joy Griffiths.

The workshops were supported by Rainbow Services via Let's Get Connected funding, which aims to strengthen the social prescribing programme & network across West Essex.

11 participants

37.5% of participants came from social prescribing referrals (Local GP, Local Food Bank, friends & family referral)

100% had not engaged with Harlow Playhouse or Rhiannon Faith Company previously

100% reported that they found the course very enjoyable

100% reduced social isolation by making new friends

67% reported that their personal resilience to cope with life had improved

75% agreed that their mental health had improved as a result of the activity

63% improved their mental wellbeing by improving stress levels and making lifestyle changes

Participant feedback:

- ❖ "I have spent more time at the Harlow Playhouse - now on the volunteer usher programme - and enjoying the environment it provides"
- ❖ "(I have gained the) Ability to access and process my own feelings and how I use them to interact with others"
- ❖ "(worries about my mental health) Decreased whilst in workshops due to having purpose and meeting other people"
- ❖ "I have experienced truly outstanding facilitation over the 6 sessions. This has helped me feel more positive towards groups of people. I have been able to face difficulties in a better way - calmer and more compassionate"

A group of five people standing in a line against a light blue background. From left to right: a man with a beard in a yellow shirt, an older man in a light purple shirt, a woman in a white dress, a man with a beard and tattoos in a purple t-shirt, and a woman in a white sleeveless top. All five individuals have their hands pressed against their faces, suggesting a state of emotional distress, grief, or intense listening. The image is framed by a light pink border on the left and right sides.

9 ACTS OF CARE

Following the Care Workshops, **8** workshop participants joined **5** professional dance artists to create a new dance theatre show, **9 Acts of Care**. Working with Rhiannon Faith, each participant created their own Act of Care, drawing from personal experiences of living with, and without, care. A ninth act was created for the participants who were unable to commit to the performance element of the project, as a way of their experiences, writing and movement materials being included in the work. The aim of the process was to empower the participants to feel valued and cared for, gaining new skills and confidence and improving their mental health and wellbeing along the way.

Participant/Performer Feedback:

- ❖ “Little by little, I am becoming free. Dance theatre has started my healing within my soul. Thank you Rhiannon and team”
- ❖ “This project helped me to get back in touch with my true self and to reflect upon what I want going forwards”
- ❖ “I think that I’m a different person now from the one that started. More confident. I’m very proud, but more that that I’m grateful’
- ❖ “It has enabled me to realise how my own skills, qualifications and personal qualities could be transferred into a more creative direction whilst still making a change in the world”
- ❖ “Thanks for empowering me to feel”
- ❖ “Hands down a life highlight, thank you.... I genuinely believe I have made lifelong friends”

“9 Acts of Care was a unique opportunity for beautiful people, who experienced and survived lack of care to be heard, be seen, be brave, be honest, be important. It cannot compensate (nothing really can) their lived experience of lack of care, but they definitely know now – You all care and we care about them.

I’ve seen amazing transformation in Participant A and Participant B. I’ve seen their wings growing and them flying high. Your caring team taught them how to fly and showed them the sky” - Marina, Voluntary Action Epping Forest

9 Acts of Care was performed **15** times over **5** days during A Festival of Care in Harlow.

Audience feedback collected via the thought wall and feedback postcards shows audiences reflected on their own mental health, felt seen, felt connected to those in our community experiencing suffering, and were impressed by the quality and emotional impact of the work.

Audience feedback:

- ❖ “Thank you for seeing, me, us, you! Thank you for showing beautiful work”
- ❖ “A very caring thought provoking and inspiring performance which helped me to reflect on my own mental health and techniques to take care of it”
- ❖ “Your performances made me feel inspired to look at things in a new way. We need to care!”
- ❖ “The show has shone a light on an issue that isn’t talked about much. It made me really think about the people who aren’t as fortunate as most”
- ❖ “Wonderful, moving and compelling show. Must admit I shed a tear, laughed and was totally transfixed. As were the rest of the audience. A show that will remain with me for a long time”
- ❖ “I brought my two grandchildren to Harlow Park just for a day and came across the Care Project. I watched the performance in full. I was brought to tears. It was so emotional and beautiful. I am amazed how life is for the people in Harlow and around the world. I myself have serious problems mentally and physically - thank you for seeing me”
- ❖ “I am going through things by myself as a single mum of five boys and moving away from my family. I do feel lonely sometimes, so thank you so much for opening up my eyes so much more. The performance was so beautiful.”
- ❖ “Left feeling very emotional. Such powerful and honest work. I will use the Care room analogy in my own life from now on. Thank you”



9 Acts of Care
participant/performers:
(left to right) Cat, Marlie,
Sam

9 Acts of Care
participant/performers:
(left to right) Dave,
Klara, Sheri



9 Acts of Care
participant/performers:
(left to right) Donna,
Annie



A FESTIVAL OF CARE



A Festival of Care took place in Harlow Town Park, 2 - 6 August 2022, offering free shows, family friendly activities, music, creative workshops and signposting from local providers. The festival aimed to celebrate care and community in Harlow, to improve the health and wellbeing of attendees and to engage those who are traditionally underserved and marginalised from cultural and creative activities.

3013 audiences

1913 participants

15 local organisations, artists and community groups

58 performances, workshops & signposting activities

718 people engaged with signposting activities from local mental health & wellbeing providers

37% attendees were from postcodes with low arts attendance

64% identified as working class

39% said they never engage in cultural or creative activities

80% had not engaged with Harlow Playhouse or Rhiannon Faith Company previously

19% attendees had a disability or long-term health condition

Festival attendee feedback:

- ❖ "What a fantastic festival! Thank you to all the organisers, people who took part. I hope this becomes a yearly event"
- ❖ "Amazing, beautiful and exactly what Harlow needs"
- ❖ "A massive show of care for the people of Harlow"
- ❖ "This has made me proud to be from Harlow. Thank you!"
- ❖ "Your breathing exercises made me feel weightless and beautifully calm - thank you"
- ❖ "The family had a fantastic day. The show and dancing were great! The food was amazing!"

**Festival Activity: (left to right)
Creative Writing workshop for
children, Essex Have Mercy
performance extract, Harlow
Ukulele Band**





LEGACY

The Care House Project created long term positive change for the people that engaged with it.

The 8 people we met through the workshops, who co-created and performed in 9 Acts of Care, are now active in the cultural life of Harlow. 2 have gone on to take part in other creative projects, 3 are volunteering at local cultural organisations (Harlow Playhouse, Gibberd Gallery, Harlow Museum and Walled Garden), and 2 were part of the steering committee for the Harlow Pride 2022 event in Harlow Town Park.

The group now forms the Rhiannon Faith Company steering group, influencing the company's work in Harlow and beyond.

Future Life

Rhiannon Faith Company are working to turn The Care House Project into a permanent offer for Harlow, with a year round programme of creative health workshops, annual co-created dance theatre performances, and an annual Care Festival. Through the project we hope to develop our steering group and create a bigger community of local decision makers.

In 2023, Harlow Council secured £20 million from the Government's levelling up scheme for the Playhouse Square Cultural Quarter. We are working with Harlow Playhouse and local organisations to deliver The Care House Project in 2024 onwards in Playhouse Square. Our ambition is for the project to be the flagship event for the opening of the new Cultural Quarter in 2026, placing local people at it's heart.

The Care House Project



CREDITS

With thanks to:

The Festival of Care contributors: Anwaar Belly Dance, Butterfly Effect Wellbeing, Community Embrace, Changing Lives, Efua Sey Cultural Academy, Employ-Ability, Essex Have Mercy, Harlow College Fashion department, Harlow Ukulele Band, Hip Hop Pop, Lu Williams, Matipo Arts , MIND in West Essex, Pets' Corner, Plant Pots and Wellies, Rainbow Services Community Hub, Safer Places, The Luna Emporium Health and Wellness Centre, Voices of Harlow Choir & Voluntary Action Epping Forest.

The 9 Acts of Care team: Devised and Performed by: Klara Bow, Lewis Bramble, Annie Carpenter, Dom Coffey, Sheri Dias, Sam French, Donna Glynn, Dave Hobbs, Donald Hutera, Marla King, Marlie Fuentes Palacios, Cat New, Finetta Oliver-Mikolajaska. Devised with Anne Williams. Choreographer/Director: Rhiannon Faith, Rehearsal Director: Nikki Watson, Producer: Lydia Wharf, Set Design: Marina Diamantidi with initial design input from Blue Bradfield, Set Build: Scene2, Set Decoration: Amy Freeman, Music Direction: Rhiannon Faith, Sound Recordings: Shea Lolin, Costume Design: Rhiannon Faith, Production Manager: Daniel Ellis, Production Team: Joshua Cole-Brown, Adam Horvath, Lewis Mote, Team Counsellor: Joy Griffiths

The project team: Artistic & Executive Director Harlow Playhouse: Rory Davies, Executive Director Rhiannon Faith Company: Maddy Morgan, Festival Coordinator: Penelope Diaz, Print Design: Anne Van Den Boogaard, Security: General Security Services Ltd, Video: Big Egg Films, Photography: Foteini Christofilopoulou

Project supporters: The Care House Project is co-produced by Rhiannon Faith Company and Harlow Playhouse, with support from Harlow Poverty Alliance. The project is funded using public funding by Arts Council England, National Lottery Community Fund, and The Essex County Council Arts and Cultural fund. With development support from Stafford Gatehouse Theatre.



www.rhiannonfaith.com

[Watch 9 Acts of Care - Video by Big Egg Films](#)

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