



Amies London Project Report

September 2024 to July 2025

Prepared by Cat Foley, Project Manager

Amies London is a multi-arts programme of sessions for female survivors of human trafficking. The Amies London group meet weekly to make friends, learn new skills and get creative together. They play, improvise, sing, dance, perform, share stories and laugh a lot.

The drama-based workshops help to empower the women to rediscover their confidence and aspirations, leading to engagement in education, training and employment. Movement and mindfulness allow participants the opportunity to reconnect with their bodies, to feel embedded in the here-and-now and to improve their sense of belonging.

The Amies participants face many barriers and struggles: housing insecurity, long waits for documentation, financial insecurity, loneliness, poor mental and physical health, difficulty sleeping, PTSD and other trauma-related disorders and conditions. It is observed that the greatest need is to increase the ability of the participants to see themselves in a different way, to form connections with others and to be noticed by others in a positive way.

Whilst there is a lot of development of the creative skill level of the group, the real work is being done before the session really starts: in the communal sharing of food, in the laughter during warm up games, in the cheers of support and visible changes in confidence levels when the participants are empowered to verbally and physically present themselves to the group by saying their name and using physicality to pose confidently.

In the creative sessions, facilitators utilise a wide range of drama and music-based methods, including physical and vocal exercises, games, ball games, storytelling, song-writing, group singing, chorus work, role-play and physical theatre. They also engage in visual arts activities, including painting and drawing.

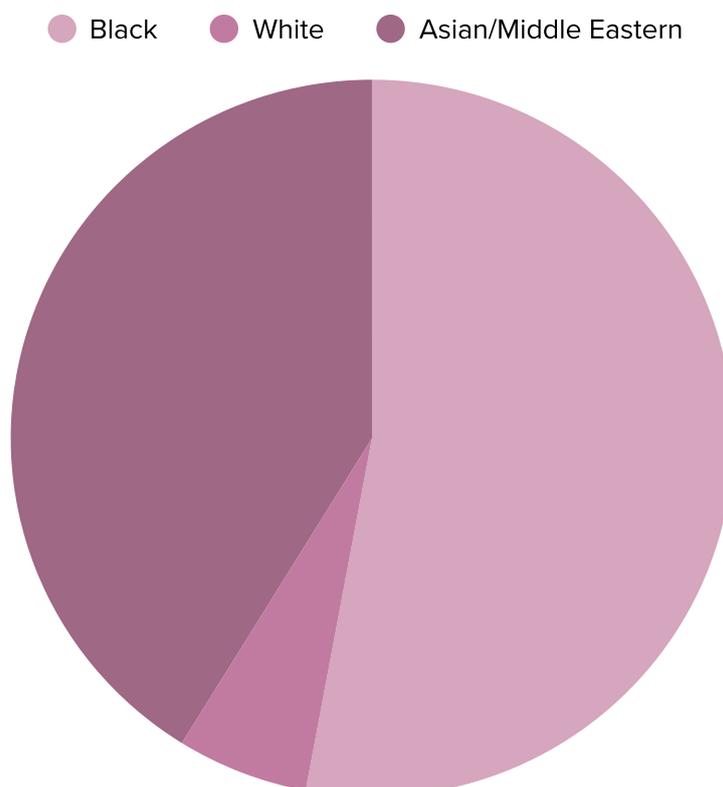


Paintings by Amies London Participants. one participant remarked *“I am a single brushstroke”*

Throughout the Year

Sessions:

- We delivered **35 regular sessions**, once a week, during term time (17/09/2024 to 08/07/2025), on Tuesdays between 14:15 and 16:30 at a Church in Homerton.
- We provided creative sessions for a total of **17 participants**, with 82% of these participants attending 5 or more sessions.
- The group attended a performance of the Snowman at the Peacock theatre in December 2024.
- They attended a performance of the Amies Alumnae Choir at Southwark Cathedral in July as part of a Modern Slavery Awareness Day.
- They performed a workshare for an invited audience, where they also exhibited some visual arts work they had created.
- In all we delivered **866 participant hours** of workshops and creative activities.
- The ethnic breakdown of the group is 50% Black, 6% White, 44% Asian/middle eastern.
- All participants identify as women, and are referred to the projects by professional services supporting them as survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery.



Throughout the Year

Recruitment and Retention:

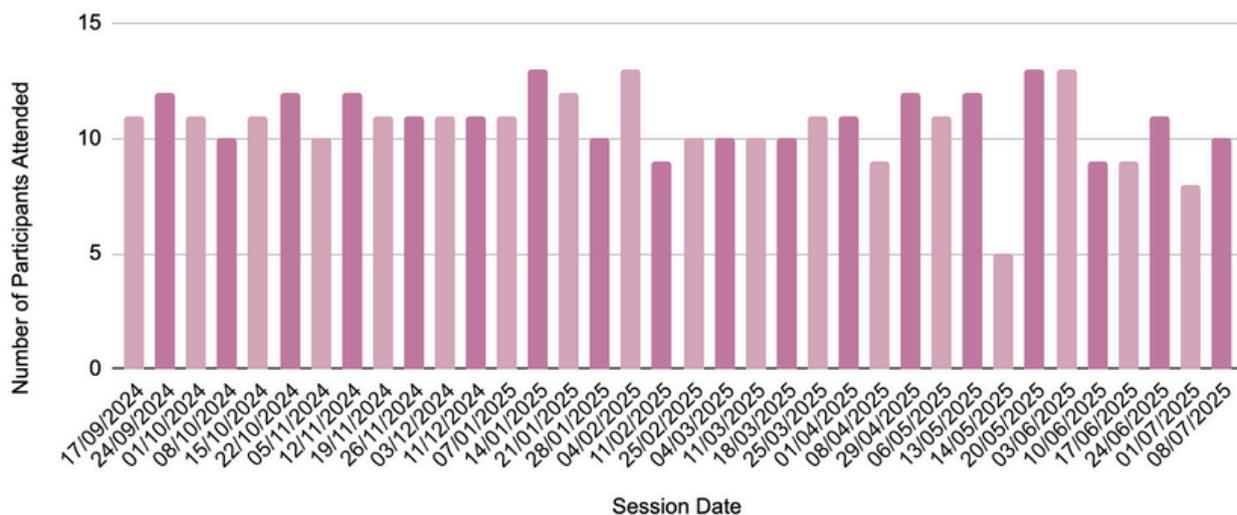
Additional to the 17 project participants, there were a further 8 on the roll - invited to join the project after being referred, but did not engage, some due to being moved away from safehouses/out of London. When participants drop off, or don't turn up for 6 weeks, spots will be opened to those on the waiting list, or to participants of the Freedom Choir, if they have not yet had the opportunity to do the Amies London Project.

Recruitment occurs through referral from safehouses, key workers, case workers, professional services and other professionals. Occasionally a participant will bring a friend, but it is ensured that this is followed by proper referral to ensure the group is the right fit for them, and that the correct caseworker information is obtained.

Staff have seen an increase in referral requests for participants who are refugees/asylum seekers, but who do not have experience of trafficking/modern slavery. The team have been supporting voluntary organisations in tools to have these conversations, without being intrusive, to ensure that the experiences of the women in the group is protected, and retains its specificity.

A small group of participants were invited to join the project towards the end of the first term in order to boost numbers, after many participants who had been referred had not yet engaged with the project. These participants did a great job of jumping into the project, and participants who had been there since day one were welcoming and supportive of them.

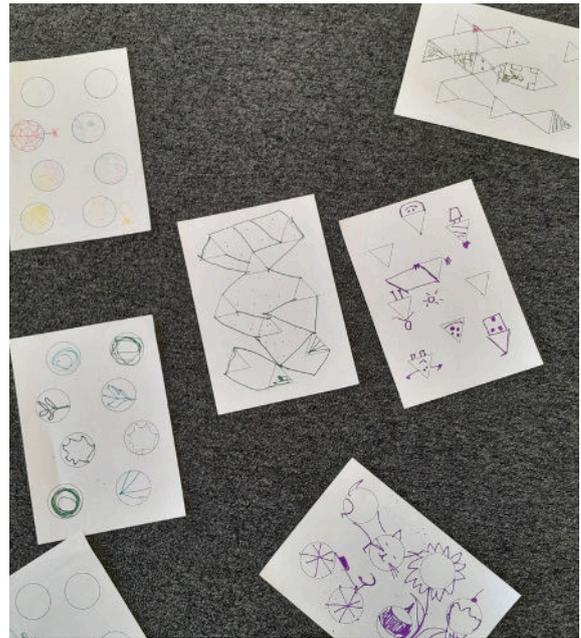
Several participants were leaving early as they wished to attend another project, but were asked to stay until the end of sessions in order to fully participate. They did so, and their engagement, focus and communication improved because of it.



Project Overview

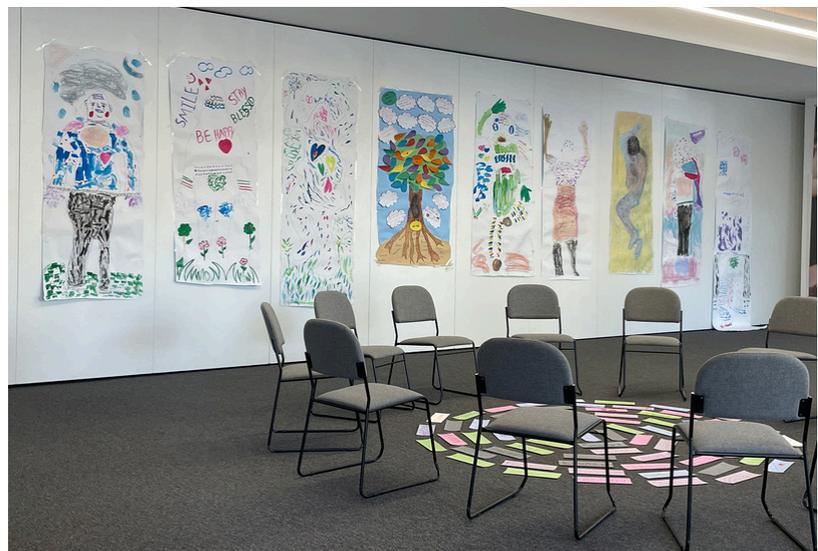
In the first term of the project, the team welcomed a cohort of new members. The start of the project focusses on developing individual expression in group 'check-ins' where participants can pick from words placed in the centre of the circle to describe how they are feeling. They develop group relaxation activities as well as physical warm ups. The sessions focus heavily on name games, team-building activities and focus games, such as ball games. It was noticed there were a few sporty participants who were highly skilled and competitive, one of whom was an ex-professional netball player.

The project volunteers receive an induction, and support to understand how to help others engage well in the sessions, and both volunteers flourished. The group also writes an agreement for how they would like the space to run. This term was capped off with a very fun trip to see The Snowman at the Peacock Theatre!



In the second term, the participants start to read out parts of the group agreement to each other in sessions, and visibly start to take more control and ownership over the space. The facilitators focus the sessions more on physicality, working on image making in individual and group exercises. There was also exploration of storytelling, however it was observed that this group responded better to movement than they did to storytelling, which is the opposite of last year for example. They explored soundscapes and did their first visual arts activity, which was highly creative and expressive, working to the prompt 'I am' painting in only hues of blue. Facilitators continued to support peer volunteers to understand project aims and expectations.

In the third term of the project, the participants started preparing for the end of year work-share. This focussed on rhythm, choreography and pattern-making, using one of the warm-up games as inspiration. Participants worked in small groups to co-create the materials, and several participants stepped up into leadership roles, supporting their peers and offering creative ideas. The participants created incredible images on huge paper, lying down and drawing an image around their body and then filling it with their internal thoughts and hopes for the future. The participants depicted a wide range of emotions, one painting chains around her figure to represent bondage and struggle, others showed nature, freedom and love. The work-share at the end of year showcased this work, alongside improvised physical theatre and group choreography.



Evaluation

We examined the impact of the project on this year's participants using a mixture of self reported reflections from the participants, both written and verbal, session reports from the Project Director, as well as session observations, using the Pan project objectives to measure the success of the project which are:

- Improved confidence
- Improved communication/expression skills
- Increased engagement in creative activities

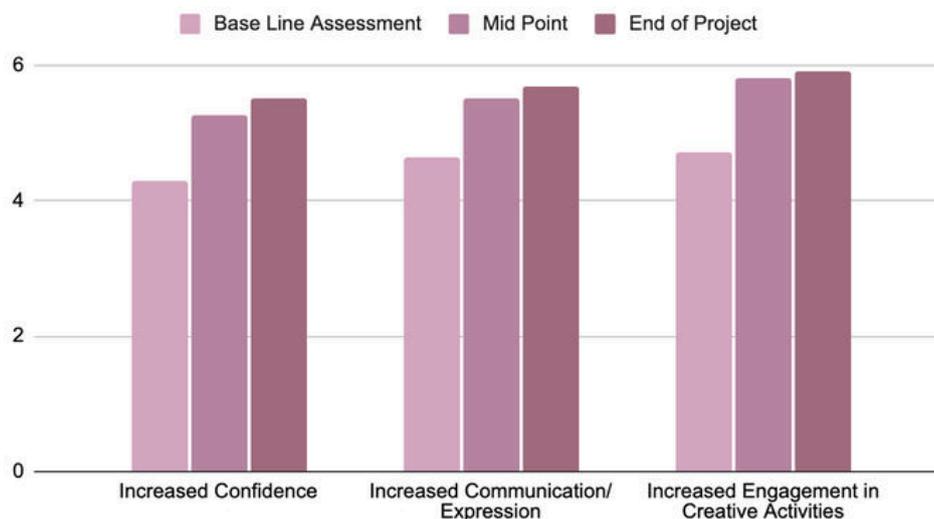
A baseline assessment is taken of each individual participant when they first attend the project, with further assessments taking place midway and at end of project. 2-3 participants are invited for a 1-2-1 interview. Case studies are also written at the end of the project.

The variety of evaluation methods allows the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The weekly staff monitoring allows the team to see small changes in an individual participant's progress, as well as identifying any additional needs a participant might have. Participants have a wide range of life-experiences, so monitoring exercises focus on observing the change in participant progress against outcomes, rather than observing the overall level. Direct feedback from the participants allows us to understand their needs and for our project goals to be led by them.

There are some limitations to our evaluation methods, including written and spoken language barriers, experiences of trauma resulting in a loss of agency in participants expressing their feelings and participants responding to questions with what they 'think you want to hear'. The goal is that the variety of methods mitigates these limitations as much as is possible.

There was noticeable improvement across the year for all three categories that we measure.

Progress against outcomes - Amies London 2024-25



It is observed that engagement is difficult to measure in sessions, as participants respond to different areas of the programme. Some respond incredibly well to sporty, physical games eg with a ball, but then lose interest in expressive theatre-based activities. Some who are shy in physical work have excelled in visual arts activities. The variety of activities has supported many participants to significantly increase their confidence, communication and expression.

Amies London Group	Increased	Maintained
Increased Confidence	86%	100%
Increased Communication/Expression	79%	100%
Increased Engagement in Creative Activities	71%	100%

Key Outcomes

Amies London participants showed clear signs of personal growth, emotional healing, and social connection through engaging with the project. Many described feeling more confident, relaxed, and open in group settings. Several women referred to a shift from isolation or anxiety to a greater sense of belonging and community. Engagement in activities such as drama, dance, singing, and games provided distraction from areas of their life which are stressful (issues around housing, asylum status, interpersonal conflict in their hostel accommodation etc) and created a way to reconnect with their identity and find joy in the company of others who have been through similar experiences.

Participants frequently mentioned feelings of safety, welcome, and inclusion, highlighting the importance of a non-judgmental, trauma-informed environment. Participants also described learning from one another across cultural and linguistic differences and building mutual respect. Some participants have developed aspirations to lead or support others, to move from participant to facilitator. The Amies project demonstrably supports emotional regulation, trust-building, identity affirmation, and increased resilience in survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery.

Improved Confidence:

Participants described beginning the project feeling shy, anxious, or withdrawn, and gradually developing a stronger sense of self and agency. Activities such as saying their name aloud, dancing, or speaking in front of others helped many to overcome fears and take pride in their presence. Confidence also emerged in the desire to support others or take on leadership roles, showing a shift from surviving to thriving.

"I'm a shy person, maybe due to trauma, so this place really helps and teaches me to become more confident. It teaches me to turn negative situations into positive ones." C - Amies London Participant

"I like that we are asked to dance around, to show our names, it builds up confidence so much to say good words about ourselves." X - Amies London Participant

Facilitators commented that some people have really pushed themselves to lead games and have grown in confidence. They note that games and group work have been especially effective in supporting group bonding, and increased confidence to take creative risks amongst peers. Participant X in particular has developed her big and expressive movements a lot, and will be joining the 'Emerge' programme next year as a trainee-facilitator.

Improved Communication/Expression:

Participants developed improved communication and self-expression, both verbally communicating with the team as well as creatively through movement and improvisation. The project provided a platform to share thoughts, feelings, and ideas without fear of judgment. Creative tools like games, drama exercises, and shared reflection opened new ways to express identity and emotion. One participant spoke of finally saying her real name with pride, others reflected on learning to express opinions, set boundaries and connect across language barriers. This development is particularly significant for women who describe that they have experienced silencing or coercion in the past.

"For so many years, I don't tell people my actual name anymore... but here, everyone has to say my actual name." X- Amies London Participant

"My experience is really positive. I feel like I go back, back to kindergarten time. It's really non judgmental. You don't have to think too much. And really have fun. I'm relaxed. That is really nice." C - Amies London Participant

"I am human" "I am a single brush stroke." Amies London Participants during a painting exercise.

Increased Engagement in Creative Activities:

Over time creative engagement increases and develops. Participants who are sceptical of attending a drama-based project, or who wonder why they are being asked to play games like 'kids', come to understand the benefits over time. Participants describe initial hesitation turning into enthusiasm for singing, dancing, games, and drama exercises. They note that creative activities lift their mood, reduce anxiety, and help them feel more connected and present. Some continue the exercises at home and many tell the team they are looking forward to sessions throughout the week. Physical movement in particular - dancing, jumping, and performing - was linked with emotional release and energy. Creative engagement also fostered collaboration and trust within the group.

"I think I'm physically more active because I had a big surgery last summer in July and I didn't feel like moving much at that time. But also, most of the time I've been very isolated. So in here we come as a group and we do some co-productions together, especially in the Amies London drama on Tuesdays. And I felt I, I started to dance and jump. And I like that we are asked to dance around to show our names, it build up confidence so much to say good words about ourselves to dance around, I think that gave me lots of confidence." X - Amies London Participant

"Amies improves my mood. That's why I say that I always look forward to come. To play. I like the dancing. Even at home, I put in my music and I start dancing by myself." I - Amies London Participant

Additional Outcomes/Observations:

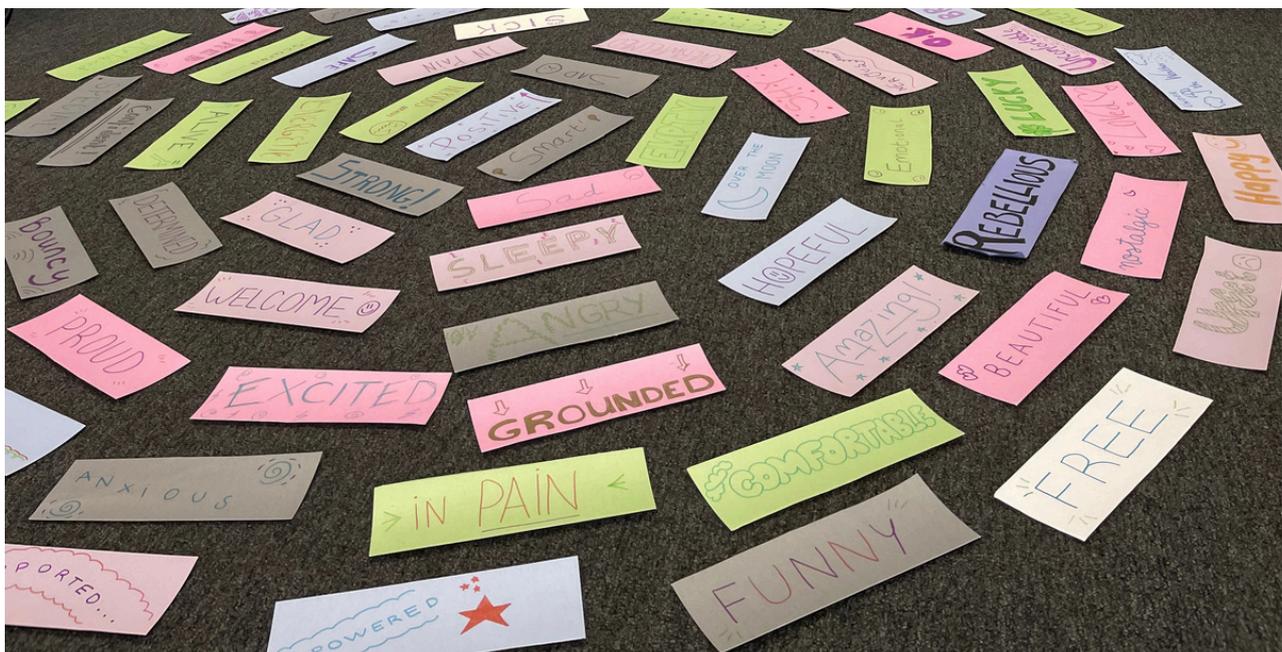
Reduced isolation and increased social connection: Many women referenced building friendships and feeling less alone.

Emotional regulation and mood improvement: Participants used words like "relaxed", "positive" and "safe", often after arriving distressed or anxious.

Cultural learning and respect: Women noted gaining understanding of others' backgrounds, faiths and traditions, encouraging mutual respect.

Desire to give back: A few participants expressed interest in becoming facilitators themselves, showing increased aspiration and purpose.

Reclamation of identity and agency: Saying their name, taking up space, and feeling seen were impactful acts of empowerment for participants.



Case Studies

Case Study D - Prepared by Adwoa Dickson, Amies Project Director

Joanne joined the Amies Project ie Amies London and the Amies Freedom Choir in September 2024. In both projects we have watched in delight how much she has grown in such a short space of time.

When **Joanne** joined Amies London, she was visibly physically anxious in the way she moved, how she responded and the way she held herself. Some of her physicality was impacted by recent surgery and this as well as her anxiety around what was going on in her life (she has had moments of being extremely stressed by the prospect of her upcoming court case), contributed to her demeanour.

When interviewed for evaluation purposes, **Joanne** spoke of looking forward to starting the projects as she had heard about them and took agency by researching them before she came. She has said that she has learnt so much about other cultures by attending, that the activities she took part in have been beneficial to her growth in confidence, and that there were certain aspects of the group that she had never seen in any other group.

From being someone who could barely get her words out without shaking and someone whose movements were contained and had a certain fragility, **Joanne** has grown into someone (who at first was the only participant to volunteer to do so) who spoke loudly, clearly and with great analysis of her art work at the end of year work share which was for an invited audience. Her willingness to do so then encouraged many other participants to do the same.

As the year progressed, **Joanne** who at times struggled with sensory overload, learned how to regulate those feelings and stay present in the room even if she was physically unable to take part in an activity.

What has been most impressive is **Joanne's** development in her physicality. Her image making and movement is now big and expressive as well as beautiful to watch and when talking about her future and what she wants to do, **Joanne** said she would like to be a facilitator. The team, recognising her ability and willingness to engage in every activity offered as well as come up with interesting and original ideas, invited her to apply to Pan's "Emerge" Programme for training participants to be facilitators and she was successful in her application. As a result, **Joanne** will join Amies London as a trainee facilitator in September!



Conclusion

The Amies London Group developed a supportive and safe environment which participants enjoyed. The community thrived, with many participants forming lasting friendships and connections. New participants joining part-way through the project were welcomed and integrated quickly.

The facilitators explored more visual arts activities, putting them at the end of more physical sessions, and this really enhanced the expression of some participants, especially those who were quieter. The physical games and exercises allowed several participants to shine, with development of confident, expressive movement and opportunities for people to step into leadership roles in small groups. The final pictures the participants created were beautiful, and they spoke so well around them in front of Pan staff.

One participant in particular attended the project this year with a son who needs additional support. She said at the end of the project *"My children love Amies which makes me comfortable here"*. There was a lot of work to be done to ensure safe practice for children in the Amies projects, and several developments in policy and procedure.

Next year the team are hoping to pilot 'The Amies Experience' which will be short-form projects of approximately 8 weeks, allowing engagement for long-standing Amies participants, as well as providing access routes to new participants who may be on a waiting list as they missed the recruitment phase, or if the project is oversubscribed. Several of the current Freedom choir members will be invited to join these projects. The team will use what they learned in the Amies Graduation choir to inform this different way of working, and to ensure that progress towards outcomes is still achieved during shorter projects.

Many of the participants continue to face struggles in their lives around housing, money, immigration status and isolation. The team will take part in CPD training at the start of the next project year to further develop skills and grow their signposting networks around self harm and suicide.

The project started with a Director, one artist facilitator and one support facilitator who left after term 1. The team adapted well to this change, and felt that going forwards they could operate without the additional staff member. Next year the team would like to explore working with volunteers who can especially support with meals for participants, and cover some childcare support when needed.

For the next year of the project, 4 participants will stay on from this year's cohort, 2 of whom will act as peer volunteers and the others to continue their development in the project. Recruitment for new participants will take place from August to November 2025, working with some existing partners, and some new who are more firmly rooted in the location of the sessions.

We look forward to another year of Amies London and the joy and development it can bring to women who have survived human trafficking and modern slavery.

