



Evaluation of Universal Comedy™

**Comedy Taster® Workshops
Developmental Comedy Course®
Public Forum Showcase Events**

**Support and Promote Recovery for People
with Mental Ill-health**

**in partnership with
Glasgow's Local Regeneration Agencies**

Mental Health Foundation

The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) is the leading UK research and development charity working in mental health, learning disabilities and dementia. The Foundation is unique in bringing teams that undertake research, develop services, design training, influence policy, and raise public awareness within one organisation.

The MHF works across the UK and Europe, with a wide variety of partners including the voluntary sector, businesses, local authorities, health boards, national bodies and networks. This breadth means that we are ideally placed to bring a vision of the 'bigger picture' of wellbeing to inform everything we do.

Evaluation Project Team

Hannah Biggs, Researcher

Ruth Stevenson, Associate Consultant

Mental Health Foundation
17a Graham Street
Edinburgh
EH6 5QN

Telephone 0131 555 5959

Email hbiggs@mhf.org.uk

Website www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
INTRODUCTION.....	1
METHODOLOGY.....	2
Response.....	3
Demographics.....	4
FINDINGS.....	8
Delivery Evaluation.....	8
Recruitment.....	8
Engagement and Course Expectations	9
Taster Workshop.....	11
The Success of the Comedy Course as a Whole.....	12
Course Set-up, Content and Delivery	15
Project Challenges and how they were overcome	16
Suggested improvements	20
Impact Evaluation	22
Summary	22
Improved Mood	23
Making new friends	24
Increased Motivation	26
Increased confidence	27
The Showcase (feelings about the performance).....	28
Self Identity.....	31
Reduction in stigma.....	32
Employability and learning new skills.....	32
External View of Impact	35
Going Forward	36
Comedy graduate.....	36
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	38
Recommendations.....	39
APPENDIX 1: Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Taster session)	41
APPENDIX 2: Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Pre-course).....	44
APPENDIX 3: Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Post-course)	47
APPENDIX 4: Focus group discussion guide	50
APPENDIX 5: Participant Focus Group Consent Form.....	74

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Universal Comedy is a charity and emerging social enterprise established in 2004 by people experiencing ill health. The aim of Universal Comedy is to engage and support people with ill health, recovering ill health, mental health problems and employment challenges by providing practical opportunities in the process and art-form of comedy. In 2008, Universal Comedy received funding to work in partnership with Glasgow based mental health services to provide tailored comedy taster workshops and developmental courses with the aim of addressing health and social inequalities, and to promote and support recovery through regular structured activity. Universal Comedy commissioned the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health (SDC) to independently evaluate these workshops and courses, called Comedy Clinics. In February 2011 SDC merged to become part of the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) and continued with the evaluation¹.

MHF has evaluated the impact the Taster Comedy Clinics, the Developmental Ten Week Comedy Course and the Participant-led Public Forum Showcase Event had on participants' mental health and wellbeing, in particular exploring the ways in which attendance of the courses impacted on their employability, recovery, and condition management. The evaluation took place between January 2010 and May 2011 and was designed and reported with a view to providing good practice guidance to assist the setting up of similar initiatives in the future.

The intended mental health and wellbeing outcomes for participants in the course included:

- Lasting friendships and support;
- Reduced isolation;
- Higher aspirations;
- Improved confidence and self esteem;
- Regained identity;
- Encouragement into learning and employment;
- Providing structure and purpose;
- Improved condition management;
- Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination through the Showcase events².

Methodology

To evaluate the impact the Taster Comedy Clinics®, the Developmental Comedy Courses and the Showcase Events had on participants the following activities were undertaken.

Participant Surveys

Three surveys were distributed to participants across the project to address the aims and objectives of the project. The surveys mainly consisted of closed questions, and

¹ Referred to from now on as MHF

² Including self stigma as well as stigma from others.

did not exceed four sides of A4 in length so not to dissuade people from completing it. Universal Comedy printed, distributed and collected completed surveys. The first survey was intended to be distributed to participants at the Taster Comedy Clinics that were run by Universal Comedy to provide potential participants with an insight into what the Comedy Clinic Workshops would involve. However, this did not happen. The second and third surveys were distributed to all participants who chose to take part in the full Comedy Clinics 10 week course. Participants received a pre-course survey to complete on the first day of the Comedy Clinics course and then received a post-course survey at the end of the course. At the close of the evaluation period, Universal Comedy posted all completed surveys to MHF who inputted the feedback into a data entry form, and analysed the findings.

Participant focus groups

In addition to the three surveys, MHF conducted two focus groups with Comedy Course participants (one focus group for each of the Comedy Course cohorts) to fully assess the impact of the courses. These focus groups took place at the end of the courses once the Showcase Event had been completed. The focus groups were facilitated by a member of the MHF research team. Universal Comedy set the date and time for the focus groups, and invited participants to attend. A cash incentive was given to participants by Universal Comedy. Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants and lasted around an hour and a half. The focus groups were analysed thematically and quotes have been used in the report to illustrate key findings.

Partner interview

Finally, MHF interviewed a member of staff at Glasgow East Regeneration Agency (GERA) who was involved in referring clients to one of the Comedy Courses and attended one of the 10 week courses to support participants.

Response

The aim of the project was to engage approximately 20 participants in two 10 week Comedy Courses (approximately ten participants per course). Over the period of time that the Comedy Clinics took place, attendance varied from week to week but approximately 13 people took part in the first cohort and six took part in the second cohort, meaning the 10 week Comedy Courses engaged with 19 participants overall. This evaluation is based on the respondents who took part in the pre and post-course surveys and/or the focus groups. None of the Taster Comedy Clinic surveys were distributed and so analysis is limited to those who attended the Comedy Clinic 10 week course. In the first cohort all 13 participants completed the pre-course survey and 10 completed the post-course survey. In the second cohort all six participants completed the pre-course survey and five completed the post-course survey. Therefore, this report is based on a total of 19 pre-course responses and 15 post-course responses, as well as 14 focus group participants. This shows a high response rate.

Summary of findings - Impact

Participant feedback via pre and post-course surveys and two focus groups have demonstrated that Universal Comedy has been successful in achieving intended mental health and wellbeing outcomes for participants in the 10 week Comedy Course and Showcase Event. The mental health and wellbeing of participants was improved in a range of ways.

Summary of attitude statements

Summary table of attitude statements		
Attitude statements	% Agree	
	Pre ³	Post ⁴
I enjoyed the Comedy Course	95	100
Overall, I was satisfied with the Comedy Course	95	100
I feel happier after going to the Comedy Course	84	100
I learned new skills at the Comedy Course	74	100
I feel more confident after going to the Comedy Course	73	100
I would recommend the Comedy Course to my friends or family	79	87
I made new friends at the Comedy Course	58	86
I am looking forward to taking part in a performance at the end of the Comedy Course	69	85
I would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Comedy Course	84	80

Improved mood

100% of participants at the end of the Comedy Course (compared to 84% at the beginning) said that they felt happier after going to it.

“I can honestly say that I feel a million times better. I laugh a bit more, I smile a bit more.”

Many of the comments made during the evaluation illustrated that the positive impacts the Comedy Course had on mood were sustained beyond the course workshops thus showing the courses potential to have long lasting impacts on participants.

“I see the funny side of life now. I can laugh at myself, whereas before I didn’t think anything was funny at all. I just feel happier inside.”

³ 19 responses

⁴ 15 responses

Building friendships and peer support with other participants

86% of participants at the end of the Comedy Course (compared to 58% at the beginning) said that they had made new friends at the Comedy Course. Attending the course has also helped people gain confidence in developing relationships and enhanced their social skills.

“Helps me have more confidence to make friends.”

The friendships created between participants were important in providing participants with peer support, both within and outwith the workshops.

“We all support each other, and we’re always here for each other.”

“We’re all in the same boat, and we can all help one another and support one another.”

Increased motivation and reduced isolation

Building new friendships and social supports motivated some participants to stay engaged in the project, which helped reduce their isolation.

“I never wanted to go outside and this has got me out of the house, to meet people. I enjoy the company.”

For some participants attending the Comedy Course increased their motivation as getting up and coming to the course was in itself an outcome.

“Easterhouse is like the other side of the city for us...Just to motivate yourself in that way and go every week was an achievement to me I think.”

Reduced isolation and building social supports are thus additional project objectives that were successfully achieved by the Comedy Course.

Improved mental health and condition management

The Comedy Course helped provide some participants with a structure and purpose to their day.

“It’s given me something to look forward to.”

“It has given me purpose to my day.”

This has in turn motivated participants to attend the Comedy Course and allowed them to gain positive mental health outcomes from attending.

“I think it’s really lifted the depression, and my husband particularly saw big differences in me...it’s something that’s bringing me back.”

“It’s the old saying...laughter’s the best medicine.”

As a result, some participants have become better at managing their condition and not letting it get in the way of doing things that make them feel better.

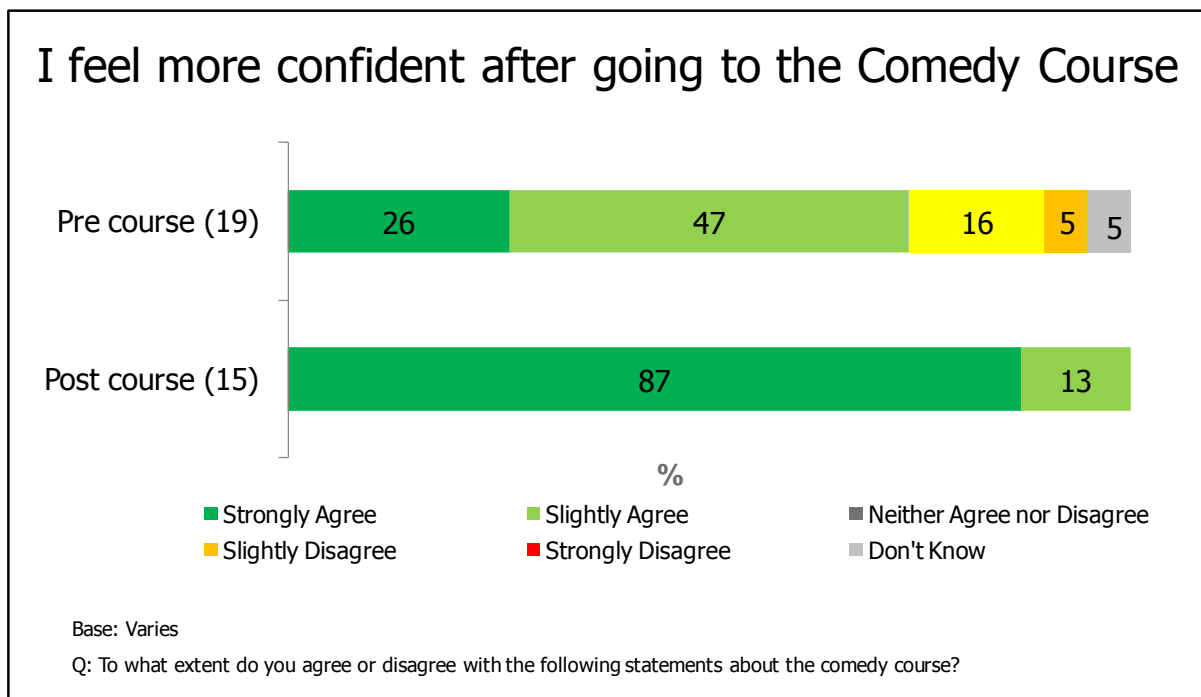
“I just wanted to sit back and let them entertain me, but with me having the motivation and having to put some work into it, I get more out of it. I get more reward, I’ve got happier and my depression has kind of left me.”

“I came along supported by Carr-gomm at the beginning but all other weeks I came myself which was a big step. It made me feel fine again and express myself.”

Increased confidence and self esteem

100% of participants at the end of the Comedy Course (compared to 73% at the beginning) said that they felt more confident after going to the Comedy Course.

“I feel more confident within myself.”



The confidence participants gained throughout the course meant they had overcome their fear of putting on a showcase and were able to go through with it.

“I actually said when they said that we would be doing a show at the end of it, I says, ‘No way will I be doing anything.’ But it came about, so it just shows you, you don’t know what’s round the corner.”

Higher life aspirations

Being able to stand up in front of an audience at the Showcase increased participants' confidence further by helping them achieve something they had not thought possible.

“I spoke about Universal Comedy [to a support worker]. I said I can't believe I went up on stage, six months ago you probably wouldn't have got me out my front door...I would recommend it to anybody.”

Regained sense of self and identity

Attending the Comedy Course and the Showcase also helped participants feel like “themselves” again, feeling as if they had regained their sense of identity.

“I managed to get my personality back.”

“This workshop here has given me a lot of confidence to feel okay in my own skin. Doing this course has really helped me come out of my shell and I think it has helped other aspects of my life.”

Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination through the Showcase events

Many respondents felt that participating in the Showcase helped challenge stigma and discrimination of mental health as it helped people see them differently, which reduced stigmatising views of mental health problems.

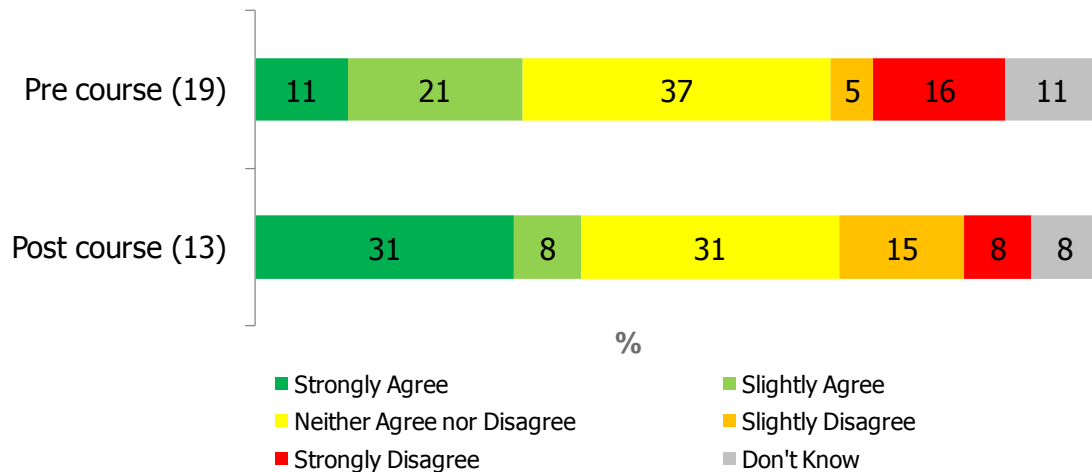
“I think when you tell people what you're doing it does take the, I won't say it takes the stigma away, but it certainly removes it a wee bit.”

“We do feel that people look at us in a different light now we've done the comedy thing. Because I think they think, 'Oh these are people that suffer from mental health issues, and they can do it,' and obviously it encourages other people with mental health problems to give it a bash.”

Encouragement into learning and employment

Many respondents were uncertain whether attending the Comedy Course had improved their employment prospects and only 39% of participants at the end of the course (compared to 32% at the beginning) agreed with the statement “I feel confident to look for paid or voluntary work”.

I feel confident to look for paid or voluntary work



Base: Varies

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the comedy course?

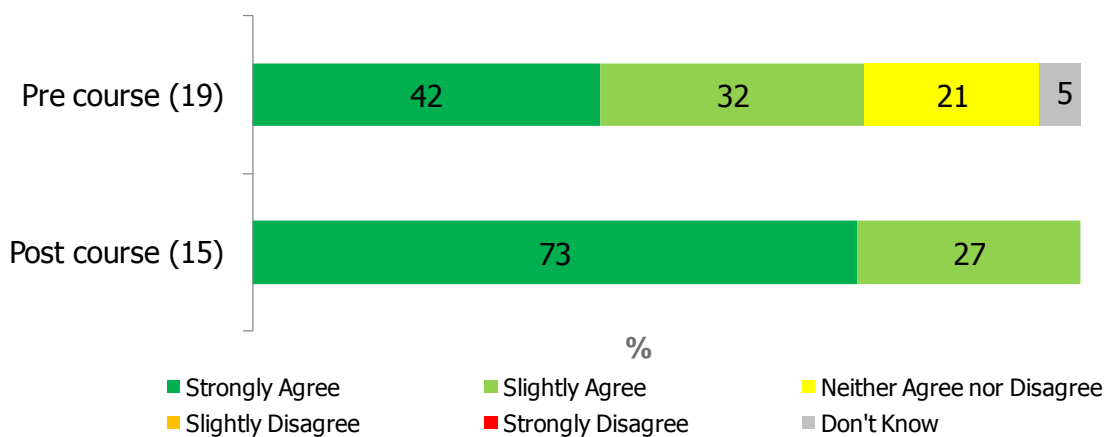
However, some participants recognised that the confidence and skills they learnt as a result of attending the project had improved their employment prospects and gave the following responses to the question “How was coming to the Comedy Course improved your employment prospects?”.

“More confidence to get qualifications.”

“I have a much better chance of expressing myself.”

“It’s helped me with my shyness, and my presentation.”

I learned new skills at the comedy course



Base: Varies

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the comedy course?

One respondent explicitly mentioned that attending the Comedy Course had helped them find employment.

“I have now got a new part-time job and am delighted.”

Furthermore, some of the people who dropped out of the course did so because they had got a job and could no longer attend the course, which was therefore not captured in the post-course survey.

The benefits people gained from participating in the Comedy Course helped them access other opportunities to enhance their lives.

“I find it’s opened up new opportunities for me.”

“For me it has given me the opportunity when other workshops have come up I’ve said yes to them.”

What worked well and key learning

By talking about their experience of participating in the project, participants were able to identify those factors that have helped the project work well, as well as identify a number of challenges that have arisen during the process.

An important contributing factor for the success of the projects was the comedians who delivered the course. Participants felt they were non-judgemental, encouraging, and approachable. Of particular benefit to participants was the continual positive feedback that they provide to help participants get the most out of the workshops and which helped them to stay engaged.

“I found that any time you thought there was something difficult, they were there to help you through it.”

Staff were also skilled in ensuring that they supported participants to help themselves. They passed on new skills and encouraged participants to develop their own skills.

“I didn’t realise that we would be doing the work and cheering ourselves up. I didn’t realise we had to put that effort in. I am glad that we did, really glad.”

All of the above assisted many participants in developing the skills and confidence they needed to take part in the Showcase Event at the end of the course which further boosted their confidence and self belief.

In addition, of particular note was the success of Universal Comedy in engaging its target audience. By ensuring that the course was easily accessible, free, at an appropriate time, open to all abilities and experience and delivered in a supportive way, it was able to address social and health inequalities and successfully engaged people experiencing mild to moderate and severe and enduring mental health problems.

Other features that helped the projects to be successful included:

- Using a range of methods to promote and raise awareness about the project to try and reach the target group and gain the buy-in of referrers;
- Gaining the buy-in of referrers who acted as local champions to encourage referrals and support participants to stay engaged;
- Offering taster workshops so participants could come and try the course before committing to it;
- Delivering a high quality varied and adaptable course which motivated and engaged participants;
- Offering a variety of activities to encourage continued engagement and inclusion;
- Creating a fun and safe atmosphere;
- Providing free access to the project;
- Being based in a venue that was easily accessible by public transport;
- Making the course accessible in terms of the time it was run and the accessibility of the venue;
- Ending with a Showcase which gave participants something to work towards.

For participants the key challenge associated with participating in the projects was having the confidence to take that first step of engaging, or feeling intimidated by the activities involved. Participants reflected that they were helped to overcome these issues by staff and peers. However, without feedback from those who dropped out or who didn't engage to start with, it would be difficult to know if further challenges exist.

Overall, participants recognised what they have got out of being part of the projects and saw value in the project continuing, both for themselves and others.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the good practice identified through the evaluation findings, a range of recommendations for other organisations who want to develop similar projects are set out below.

These recommendations are of particular relevance to those setting up and running successful projects which aim to engage with people with mental health problems to support their recovery, build their capacity to self manage, and promote their social inclusion. However, these recommendations are also relevant for anyone who wants to engage with isolated groups and deliver a project which promotes mental health improvement and build confidence, self-esteem and higher aspirations amongst participants.

Some recommendations for a successful project are:

- Use a variety of methods to advertise and engage participants to effectively reach the target group and help maximise engagement;
- Where possible, have a referral partner organisation(s) who can help with recruitment and maintaining engagement;

- Running taster workshops can help potential participants see what is involved before committing to a course and can help encouraging attendance;
- Use prior knowledge or conduct research to identify potential barriers to access and from this decide on appropriate days, times and running time for target groups and where the activities should be based;
- Identify and develop ways to break down barriers to engagement for participants (e.g. offering project for free, accessible by public transport, at appropriate times of day);
- Where possible, a venue should be local or easily accessible by public transport;
- Employ appropriate staff that can effectively engage and motivate participants in a supportive and non-judgmental manner;
- Maintain a flexible approach to working, ready to adapt plan if necessary and allowing participants to engage in a way they feel comfortable;
- Deliver a programme of activities that can be accessed by people of varying abilities to promote social inclusion;
- Put in place an exit strategy/pathway for participants once the project finishes;
- Consider building in an opportunity for family and friends to see work to help reduce stigma and discrimination;
- Build in evaluation to evidence the successful delivery of outcomes.

The Universal Comedy Clinics have been very successful in meeting its aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of participants by supporting their recovery, condition management and building skills to enhance learning and employment opportunities. Therefore, recommendations for commissioners are to:

- Acknowledge the mental health benefits of the Comedy Clinics in aiding recovery and condition management, promoting mental health improvement more generally and developing skills to enhance employment opportunities.
- As a result, Comedy Clinics should be widely accessible to people experiencing mental health problems and people experiencing poor mental health or low self confidence.
- The success of the Comedy Clinics adds to the growing evidence based that supports participating in the arts as beneficial in promoting good mental health and wellbeing which is valued by participants. Therefore, future mental health strategies should reflect the value that service users place on participating in the arts such as the Comedy Clinics in supporting their recovery and the additional benefits they receive by engaging with participatory arts programmes.
- Participatory arts programmes have been highlighted by service users as something valuable that could be funded through Self Directed Support funds to improve their mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, good quality arts programmes like the Comedy Clinics should be made available to those who need it by providing sustainable funding.

INTRODUCTION

Universal Comedy is a charity established in 2004 by people experiencing ill health. The aim of Universal Comedy is to help and support 'hard to reach and hard to help' people experiencing ill health and mental health problems by providing practical opportunities in the process and art-form of comedy. Using comedy as an educational developmental tool, Universal Comedy participants produce and perform their own comedy, create and share ideas and in the process develop core skills, confidence and self-esteem as well as promoting their health and wellbeing. Workshops and Courses are delivered by a team of comedy tutors who are artists, professionals, performers and writers from the Scottish Comedy industry and further education establishments. Universal Comedy work in partnership with Scotland's Health, NHS, Social Care and Employability Organisations and offer a positive route for individuals to self-refer as a means to ensure that Universal Comedy makes comedy accessible to all.

In 2008, Universal Comedy worked in partnership with Glasgow based mental health services including Local Regeneration Agencies to provide tailored comedy taster workshops and developmental courses with the aim to address health and social inequalities, and promote and support recovery through regular structured activity. Universal Comedy commissioned the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health (SDC) to independently evaluate these workshops and courses, called Comedy Clinics. In February 2011 SDC merged to become part of the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) and continued with the evaluation⁵.

In the Comedy Clinics, Universal Comedy worked with people with lived experience of mild to moderate and severe to enduring mental health problems to support them in seeking a route to recovery. Participants faced barriers to vocational training, learning and further education because they lived within identified Regeneration Agency areas. In this report MHF has evaluated the impact that the Taster Comedy Clinics, the Developmental Ten Week Comedy Course and the Participant-led Public Forum Showcase Event had on participants' mental health and wellbeing, in particular exploring the ways in which attendance of the courses impacted on their employability, recovery, and condition management.

The evaluation took place between January 2010 and May 2011 and was designed and reported with a view to providing good practice guidance to assist the setting up of similar initiatives in the future.

The intended mental health and wellbeing outcomes for participants in the course included:

- Lasting friendships and support;
- Reduced isolation;
- Higher aspirations;
- Improved confidence and self esteem;
- Regained identity;
- Encouragement into learning and employment;

⁵ Referred to from now on as MHF

- Improved condition management;
- Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination through the Showcase events.

METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the impact the Taster Comedy Clinics®, the Developmental Comedy Course and the Showcase Events had on participants, three participant surveys were used. MHF drafted the surveys in consultation with Universal Comedy who signed them off. The survey questions were designed to address the aims and objectives of the project and included questions on: satisfaction with and enjoyment of the session; suggestions for improvements; and impact related questions. The surveys mainly consisted of closed questions, and did not exceed four sides of A4 in length so not to dissuade people from completing it. The surveys were designed so that the core questions could be used for subsequent workshops where the focus may not be mental health or employment. The final versions of the three surveys can be found in Appendices 1 to 3.

Universal Comedy printed, distributed and collected completed surveys. The first survey was intended to be distributed to participants at the Taster Comedy Clinics. The Taster Comedy Clinics were run by Universal Comedy to provide potential participants with an insight into what the Comedy Clinic Workshops would involve. Universal Comedy facilitated a number of exercises with participants to give them a taste of the sorts of things they could get involved in if they attended the 10 week workshops. The Taster Comedy Clinic survey was not distributed by Universal Comedy and so no data exists from the survey about this element of the course. However, participants talked about the Taster Comedy Clinics in the focus group discussions so some data was gathered about this element of the project.

The second and third surveys were distributed to all participants who chose to take part in the full Comedy Clinics 10 week course. Participants received a pre-course survey to complete on the first day of the Comedy Clinics course and then received a post-course survey at the end of the course. The aim of all three surveys was to gain a quantitative measure of impact by taking a snapshot of people's feelings and attitudes and tracking changes over time.

At the close of the evaluation period, Universal Comedy posted all completed surveys to MHF who inputted the feedback into a data entry form, and analysed the findings. Survey responses are displayed in graph format in this report with commentary.

In addition to the three surveys, MHF conducted two focus groups with Comedy Course participants (one focus group for each of the Comedy Course cohorts) to fully assess the impact of the courses. These focus groups took place at the end of the courses once the Showcase Event had been completed. The focus groups were facilitated by a member of the MHF research team who led the respondents through a series of discussions to explore the subjective experience of attending the Comedy Course via group discussion and projective techniques⁶.

⁶ Projective techniques are methods used to uncover deep-rooted thoughts that may not arise as a result of direct questioning. They consist of getting respondents to speak about something indirectly

A discussion guide was prepared by MHF and commented on and signed off by Universal Comedy. The full discussion guide can be found in Appendix 4. The focus group covered: experience of referral to the Taster Comedy Clinics; experience of recruitment to Comedy Courses; expectations of the Comedy Courses; experience of the Comedy Courses and Showcase Event; and impacts of the Comedy Courses and Showcase Event (personal, social, behavioural, employment etc.).

Universal Comedy set the dates and times for the focus groups, and invited participants to attend. A cash incentive was given to participants by Universal Comedy. The first focus group was attended by seven participants and the second focus group was attended by 4 participants. Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants and lasted around an hour and a half. The focus groups were analysed thematically and quotes have been used in the report to illustrate key findings.

Finally, MHF interviewed a member of staff at Glasgow East Regeneration Agency (GERA) who was involved in referring clients to one of the Comedy Courses and attended one of the 10 week courses to support participants.

Response

The aim of the project was to engage approximately 20 participants in two 10 week Comedy Courses (approximately ten participants per course). To do this Universal Comedy ran five Taster Workshops in Glasgow East, Glasgow North, Glasgow South West, Glasgow West and Glasgow South as well as using a variety of other methods of engagement to recruit participants to the course (see findings section). Over the period of time that the Comedy Clinics took place, attendance varied from week to week but approximately 13 people took part in the first cohort and six took part in the second cohort, meaning the 10 week Comedy Courses engaged with 19 participants overall. This evaluation is based on the respondents who took part in the pre and post-course surveys and/or the focus groups. None of the Taster Comedy Clinic surveys were distributed and so analysis is limited to those who attended the Comedy Clinic 10 week course. In the first cohort all 13 participants completed the pre-course survey and 10 completed the post-course survey. In the second cohort all six participants completed the pre-course survey and five completed the post-course survey. Therefore, this report is based on a total of 19 pre-course responses and 15 post-course responses, as well as 14 focus group participants. This shows a high response rate.

To illustrate the response of participants over the duration of the course tables have been used to illustrate pre and post-course responses. Please note that while the response rate is high, the sample sizes are small and so data should be treated with caution as one person may represent 5% or more of the overall percentage.

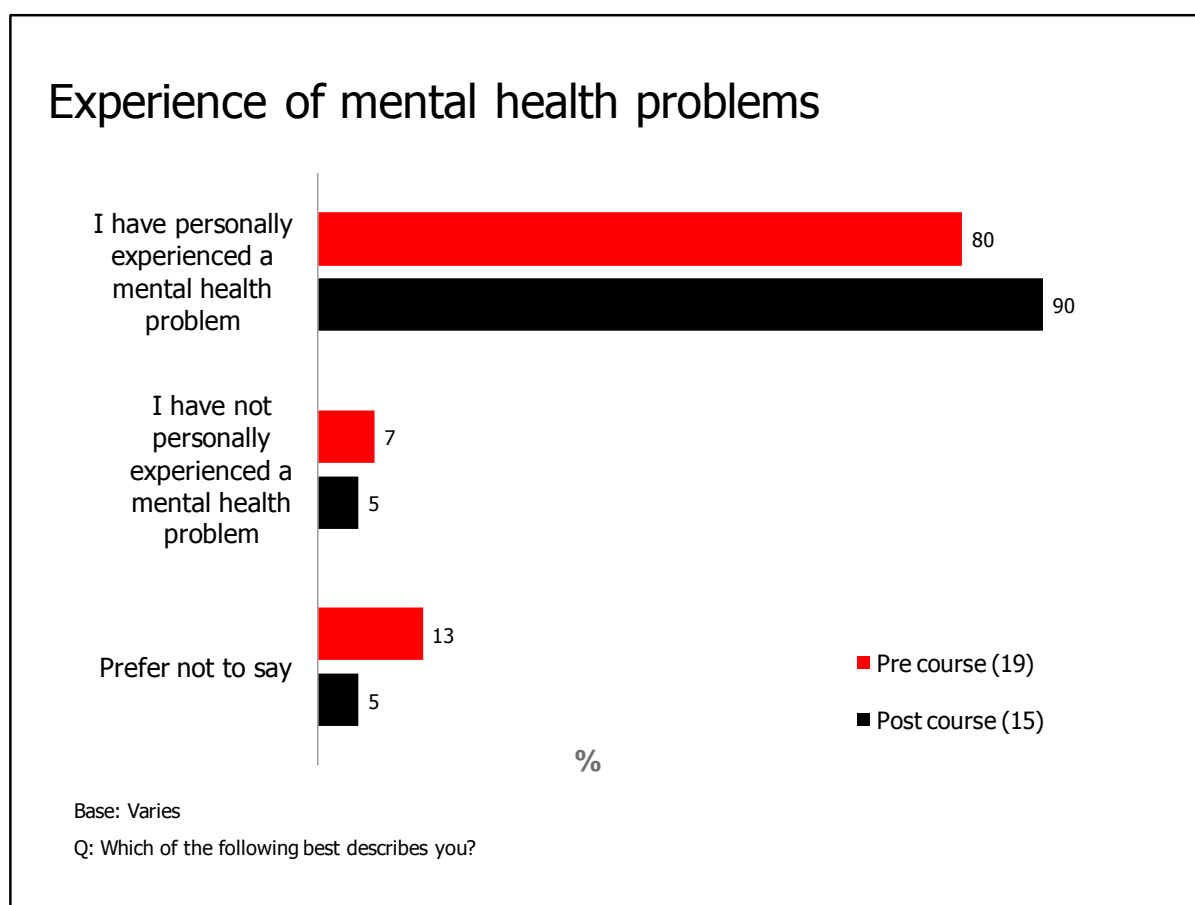
by “projecting” their thoughts on something else. This allows bypassing resistance to direct questioning that may make participants uncomfortable, or to tap into underlying thought processes that are not immediately available to respondents. In practice, these techniques are often presented as ‘games’ and are a fun way for respondents to look at their feelings from a different perspective than usual.

Demographics

The demographic make-up of the survey respondents is outlined in Graphs 1 to 4 below.

The target group for the Comedy Clinic workshops were people experiencing mental health problems. 80 – 90% of survey respondents stated that they have personally experienced a mental health problem, confirming that the target group was reached (Graph 1). A few participants chose not to say whether or not they had personally experienced mental health problems.

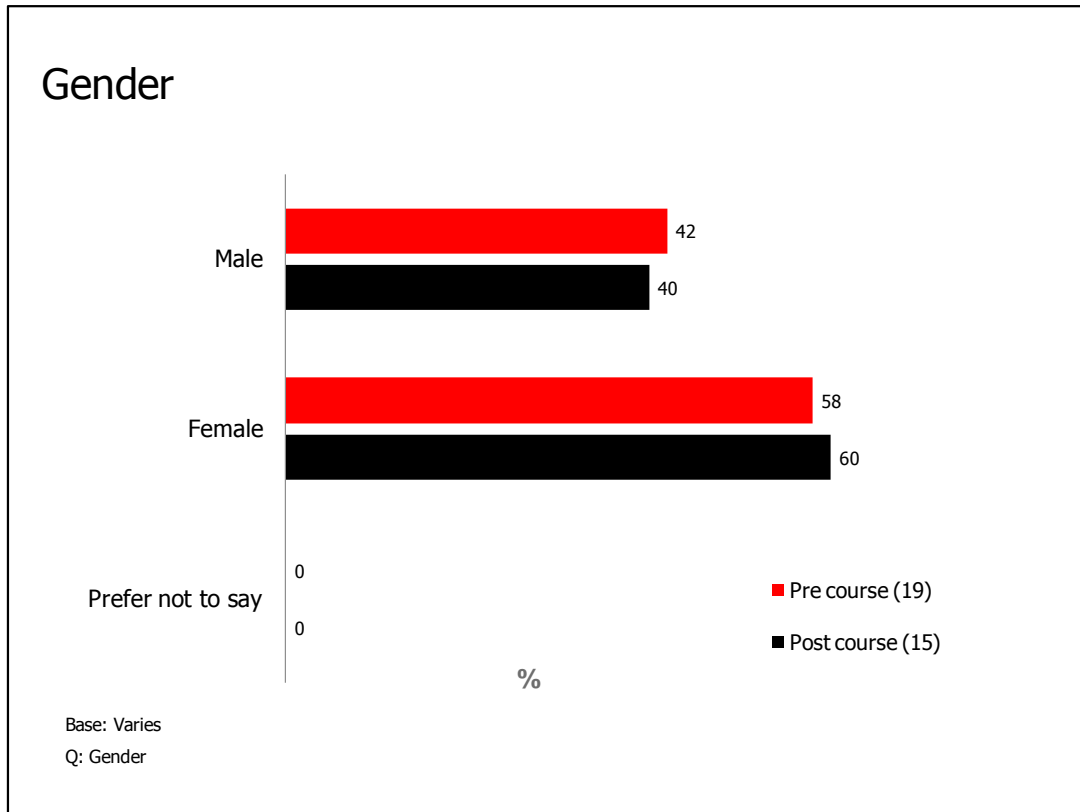
Graph 1: Experience of mental health problems of participants



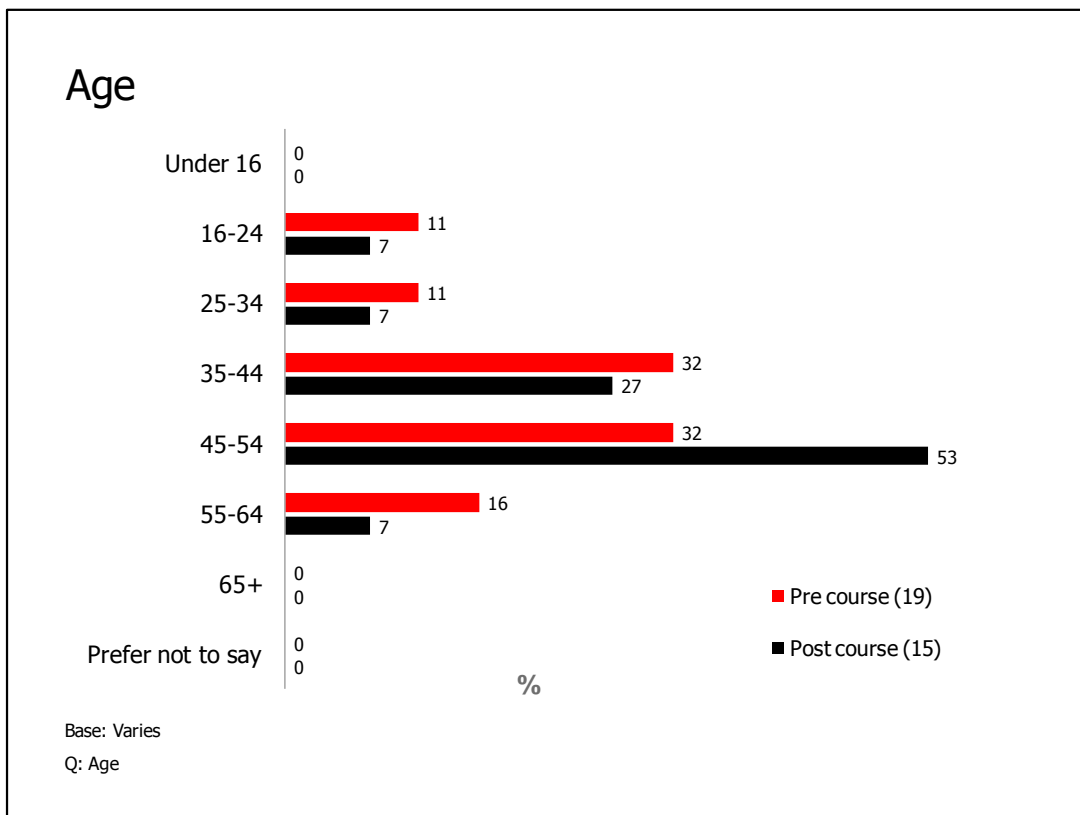
Overall, approximately 40% of the participants in the Comedy Clinic courses were male and 60% were female (Graph 2). These percentages only differ by one or two percent at the pre and post-course survey stage suggesting that the ratio of men to women over the duration of the course remained relatively constant.

However, the age range of the group of respondents to the survey changed over the duration of the workshops (Graph 3). At the start of the 10 week Comedy Clinic workshops approximately two thirds of respondents were aged between 34-44 (32%) and 45-54 (32%), with the remaining third of participants aged 16-24 (11%), 25-34 (11%) and aged 55-64 (16%). While the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups still made up the majority of participants at the end of the Comedy Clinic workshops, this majority had increased to 80% of all participants.

Graph 2: Gender of participants



Graph 3: Age of participants

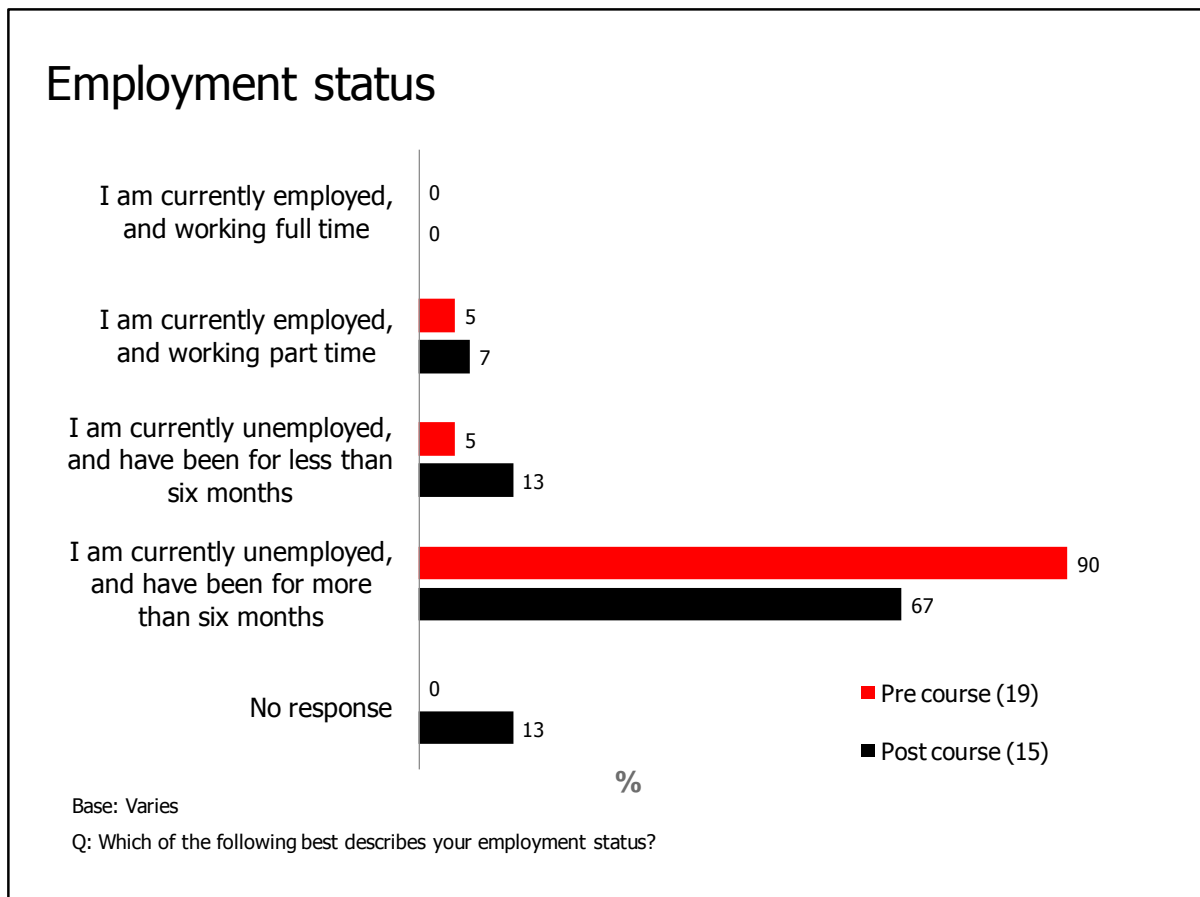


It is important to note that this seemingly marked change in the age group of participants should be viewed with caution as the sample sizes of these groups are small and a large percentage change could in fact just be one or two participants

who may have joined later in the course and thus didn't respond to the initial survey, or someone could have dropped out or had a birthday and changed age group. Therefore, it is important to note that all participants of the Comedy Clinic course are of working age with the majority aged 35-54.

In addition to age, gender and experience of mental health problems, respondents were asked to comment on their employment status. While the data suggests that there was some change in employment status of participants throughout the duration of the course, the figures again need to be treated with caution (Graph 4).

Graph 4: Employment status of participants



The percentage of respondents stating that they have been unemployed for over six months declined over the duration of the project which could reflect a change in employment status or alternatively could be accounted by the rise in participants not responding to this question. It could also reflect a change in participants involved in the project. Universal Comedy reported that some participants left the course part way through as they gained employment and were thus unable to continue to attend. The sample sizes are again small and provide little concrete information. What the responses don't suggest is that there has been a large increase in people becoming employed through the duration of the course. To gather more in depth information on this topic, employment aspirations were explored in more detail in the focus groups.

Finally, in addition to age, gender, employment status and personal experience of mental health problems, it was hoped to gauge by the survey what areas of Glasgow participants lived. However, the areas of Glasgow targeted were not highlighted by Universal Comedy and so no information was gathered on residency via the survey.

Therefore, the survey data gathered suggests that the average participant to the two Comedy Courses had a personal experience of a mental health problem, has been unemployed for over six months and is likely to be aged 38 – 54.

FINDINGS

The findings from the surveys and the focus groups are presented thematically below in two sections. The first section evaluates the delivery and set up of the project and highlights what worked well and what was challenging and could be improved on in the future. The second section highlights the impact attending the Comedy Clinics had on participants.

Delivery Evaluation

Recruitment

To advertise the Comedy Clinic courses, Universal Comedy used a variety of methods to reach their target group including: marketing materials such as posters and leaflets which were distributed via GP waiting rooms, mental health services and voluntary organisations, Community Health Partnerships (CHP), and hospitals; close partnership working with Glasgow's five Regeneration Agencies; Universal Comedy website; adverts on the radio; and contacting people linked to Regeneration Agencies who were on Universal Comedy's waiting list.

Most participants in the first Comedy Clinic cohort heard about the Comedy Course through being referred by Pat Corrigan at Glasgow East Regeneration Agency (GERA). Pat Corrigan is the Work Development Co-ordinator, which is a position funded by the NHS and hosted and managed by GERA. She works with people with mental health problems, supporting them into work, education and training. Much of her job involves case management, sourcing agencies that can provide support to her clients, and signposting clients to sources of support.

Pat first heard about Universal Comedy through one of her clients who suggested it as an idea for a project which she then took to Universal Comedy.

"One client suggested it; he felt it would assist his recovery. I ended up making a phone call and speaking with [Universal Comedy]."

Pat and her client were consequently influential in the decision for Universal Comedy to develop and run comedy courses for people with mental health problems. Later, Universal Comedy publicised their courses throughout Glasgow which prompted GERA to get involved.

"Universal Comedy were promoting their services around Glasgow and offering taster courses. GERA took up the opportunity."

Therefore, for the first cohort, participants found out about the Comedy Clinic course from GERA via Pat who felt that the Universal Comedy clinic would be suitable for any of her clients who have mental health problems and who are not in employment and thus recommended the course to a number of her clients.

"It would be all of them, all people that are unemployed."

Attending the Comedy Clinics workshops was suggested to individuals as something that they may enjoy. They were encouraged to attend a taster workshop to find out more about it which led to people signing up to attend the 10 week course.

In addition to being referred to the Comedy Clinic workshops by Pat one respondent from the first cohort found out about the workshops by word-of-mouth from a friend who had attended the taster day and enjoyed it, which encouraged them to attend the first day of the workshops. The second cohort of participants were recruited to the workshops in a number of ways outlined in the table below (Table 1) which included referral from health practitioners and word-of-mouth, similar to cohort one. However, participants from the second cohort experienced more diverse referral routes including hearing about the course on the radio.

Table 1: Recruitment methods for the second Comedy Clinic Course

Recruitment method for Comedy Course June 2010	
Recruitment method	Number of participants
Referred by mental health practitioner	2
Via Taster session	2
Via Information day at Glasgow West Regeneration Agency	1
Via Universal Comedy mailing list	1

Taking a varied approach to the advertisement and recruitment of the course was appreciated by participant and was appropriate to try and attract people from across a large area. However, the second cohort was smaller than the first and so to recruit larger numbers more consistently to any future workshops, further development of recruitment strategies would be recommended to ensure that knowledge of the course is reaching and engaging everyone who could benefit from it.

“If I had never gone to that other course, I don’t think I would ever have heard about it because I don’t listen to the radio and I had never heard of Universal Comedy in my life before and I probably wouldnae have known about it unless it was brought to my attention.”

Taking a strategic approach to recruitment and engagement was suggested by participants.

“I feel if people with mental health problems are attending clinics, psychiatrists, I feel they all should know about it.”

Engagement and Course Expectations

Participants recruited to taster workshops reported having little idea about what the content of the day would be and so had few expectations of what they would get out of it. It was an enthusiasm to get involved in something, particularly something creative that motivated many of them to attend the taster day.

“Excited just to find out, like, kind of what it was, what it entailed and stuff like that.”

“Because I said to Pat if anything like that came up, because I sing and all that and I was quite of interested in that sort of thing...if it did come up to

let me know straight away, I said, 'If anything comes up put my name down'.

"I just wanted to do something different...I don't go out much."

"I was involved in a drama group when I was well...so doing something similar to that, just the opportunity to take part was really good."

This was a sentiment shared by those participants who were recruited directly to the 10 week course. Various additional responses were given by participants in both the focus groups and the pre-course survey about what they felt they may be able to get out of attending the workshops. A structure and purpose to their day was mentioned by many participants as something they were looking to get out of attending the course.

"For me, I was just looking for some structure to my week."

Thirteen out of 19 respondents of the pre-course survey spontaneously said that increased confidence and self esteem were things they would like to get out of the attending the Comedy Course workshops.

"To build up confidence to get up and talk in front of people."

"Build up my motivation and confidence."

"Self confidence/esteem."

"Before I took ill...I felt like I was the life and soul of the party...I'd lost it all, absolutely lost it all and I thought I'm gonna go and see if I can try...to find me again."

For some participants, gaining confidence was mentioned alongside learning new skills. Five of the eight participants who mentioned that they hoped to learn new skills through coming to the Comedy Course also mentioned gaining confidence.

"More confidence in myself and to gain more insight into writing comedy."

"Learning how to become a stand up comedian and to build up confidence."

"I hope I will feel confident about writing comedy situations."

"Learn how to write and perform stand up comedy."

Learning new skills was also mentioned in the focus groups as something participants had hoped to get out of attending the Comedy Course.

"I couldn't see myself being a comedian or anything, but I thought I might be able to write something, you know, because I'm quite good at essays and putting things together."

Regaining a sense of fun and enjoyment in life and being able to laugh at things again was also mentioned as an outcome participants hoped to gain as a result of coming to the Comedy Course, both by participants in the pre-course survey and focus groups.

"I just wanted to laugh. Because I felt as if I had nothing going for me in life, and I was quite depressed, and I was wanting cheered up. And I thought that this would actually cheer me up, and that's why I went along."

"To be able to laugh at my situation, there will be people worse off than me in the world."

"Bring out my good sense of humour."

"Have fun."

In addition a couple of participants mentioned that they hoped to meet new people as a result of attending the Comedy Course and develop new friendships.

"I hope to gain more new skills and learn more and meet new friends."

"To build my confidence and meet new people."

Increased confidence, self esteem, a sense of identity, developing friendships, learning new skills and improved mood were all planned objectives for the course and so the Universal Comedy's and participants' expectations were aligned and helped encourage participants to attend the course.

Taster Workshop

At the taster workshops, Universal Comedy staff explained more about the course:

"She [Universal Comedy worker] was just explaining a wee bit who Universal Comedy are, and how it can help people with mental health problems."

"[Universal Comedy] told me it would be similar to the workshop I had done in hospital."

Universal Comedy staff introduced participants to the sort of activities they would be involved in as part of the course to get them familiar with the format.

"Just a wee warm up thing wasn't it, just to get you talking."

"They've give you a set of proverbs, and you'd write something funny, and they'd go, 'Right that's it, that's your time up,' to see the best that you could come up with, wasn't it? So sometimes it's like wee exercises and stuff."

Participants really enjoyed this approach, taking part in exercises, which motivated them to join the 10 week course.

“I expected it to be a one off thing...after [taster workshop], it happened that there was a 10 week course, and we all said we’d like to go, you know.”

“Aye, we’d like to join.”

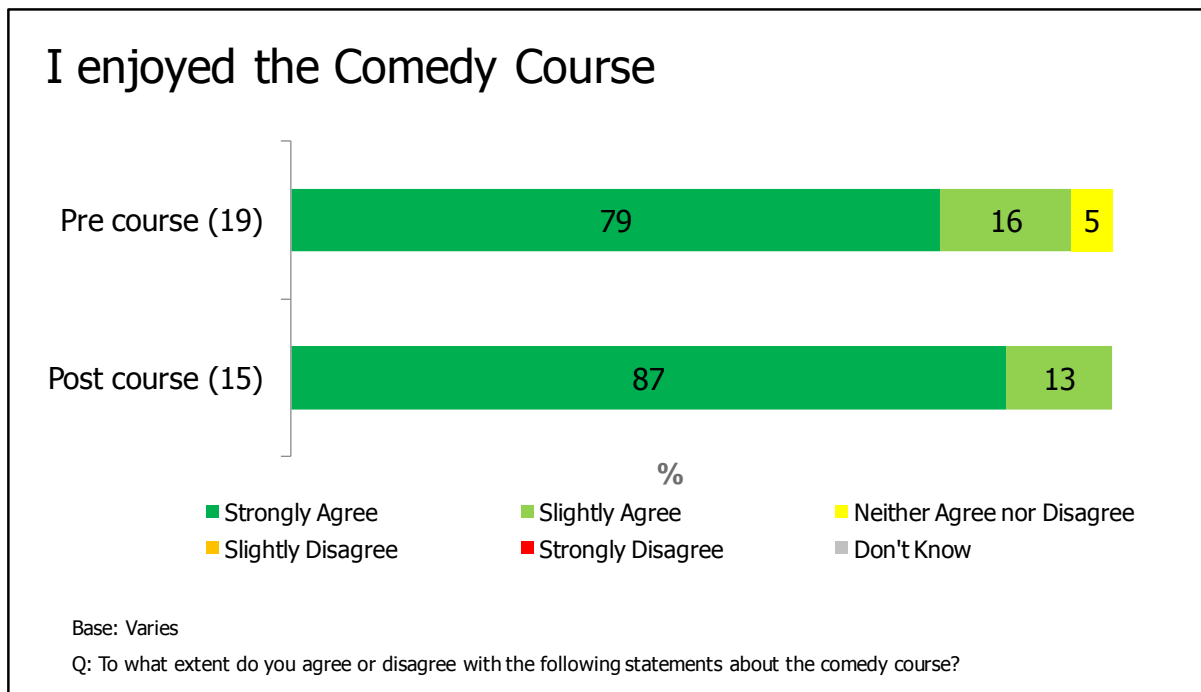
“I just got told it was called Universal Comedy. For me, to go to it was to try and lift my confidence. I also thought I couldnae do anything like that but what they told me was you didn’t have to participate in anything if you didn’t want to, you could go, listen and meet the people and think they thought that as the weeks went on you would start building up your confidence to do a wee something else.”

There was a very enthusiastic response to referral to the workshops and to the taster workshops. The impact of which provided enough motivation for 13 people to attend the first 10 week Comedy Clinic workshops, and six to attend the second cohort of workshops.

The Success of the Comedy Course as a Whole

Even after the first Comedy Clinic workshop, participants enjoyed taking part in the Comedy Course with 95% of participants either strongly agreeing (79%) or slightly agreeing (16%) to this statement in the pre-course survey. At the end of the course 100% of participants stated that they enjoyed the course with those strongly agreeing with this statement increasing to 87% in the post-course survey (Graph 5).

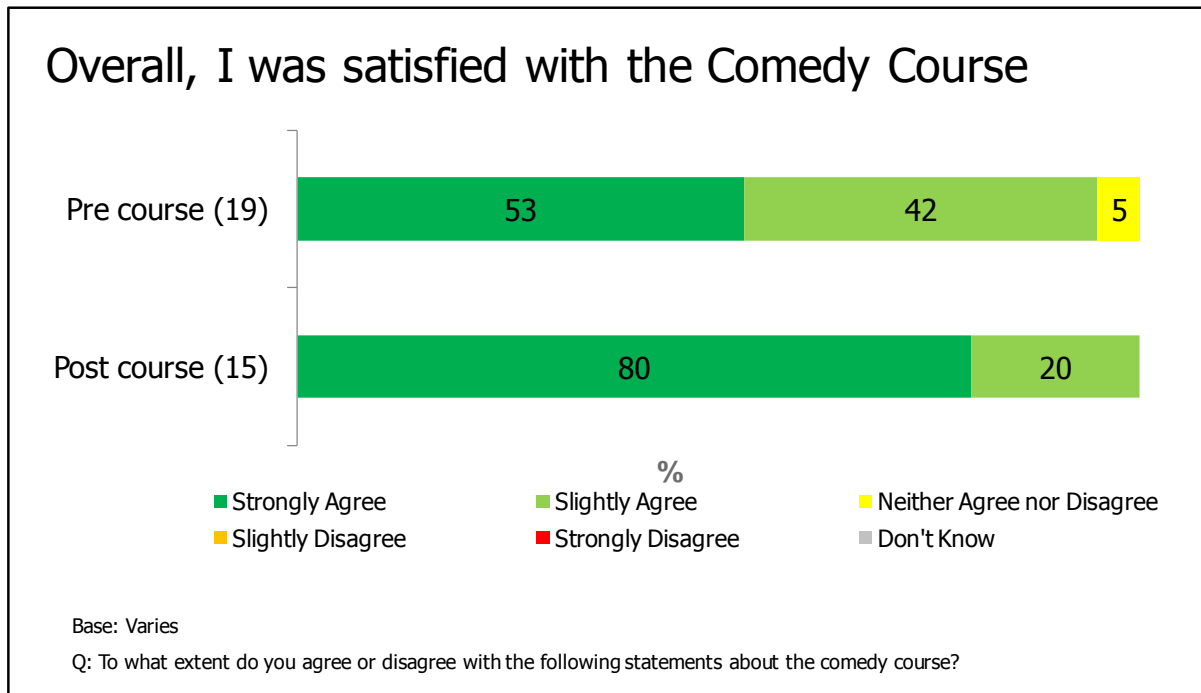
Graph 5: Enjoyment of the Comedy Course by participants over time



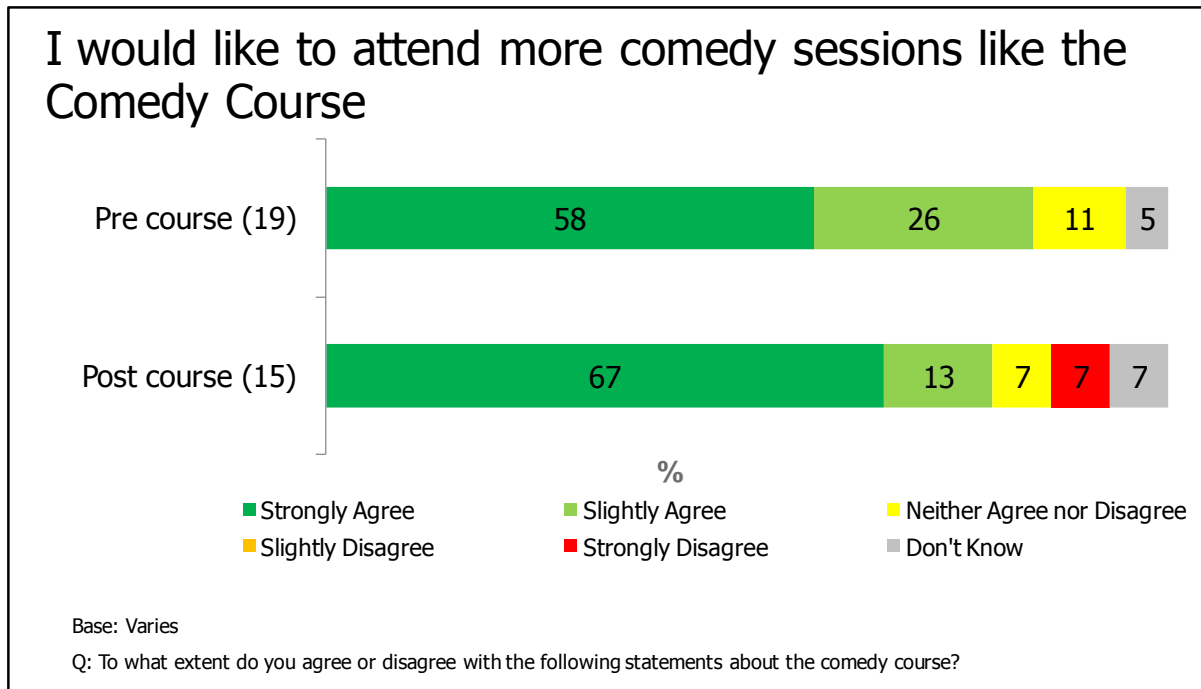
There was high satisfaction with the Comedy Clinic workshops from the start of the course with 95% of respondents at the first workshop stating that they were satisfied with the course (53% strongly agreed, 42% slightly agreed) (Graph 6). This satisfaction increased to 100% by the end of the course with 80% of respondents

strongly agreeing with the statement that overall they were satisfied by the Comedy Course.

Graph 6: Satisfaction with the Comedy Course by participants over time



Graph 7: Participant demand for more Comedy Courses over time



While there was 100% satisfaction of the course as a whole among respondents of the post-course survey, not all respondents would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Comedy Course (Graph 7). At the beginning of the course 84% of respondents either strongly agreed (58%) or slightly agreed (26%) that they would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Comedy Course. By the end of the

course this figure was quite similar with 80% agreeing with this statement either strongly (67%) or slightly (13%). While this is still a very high percentage it is unclear why 14% of participants either slightly disagreed (7%) or strongly disagreed (7%) that they would like to attend more comedy sessions. No explanation was given by participants in the survey or the focus groups for this response, and many were in support for attending further classes. It may simply be that they had found the course long enough for them. In the focus groups many participants reported that the course was long enough to get them ready for the Showcase but felt they could get further benefit from attending more workshops.

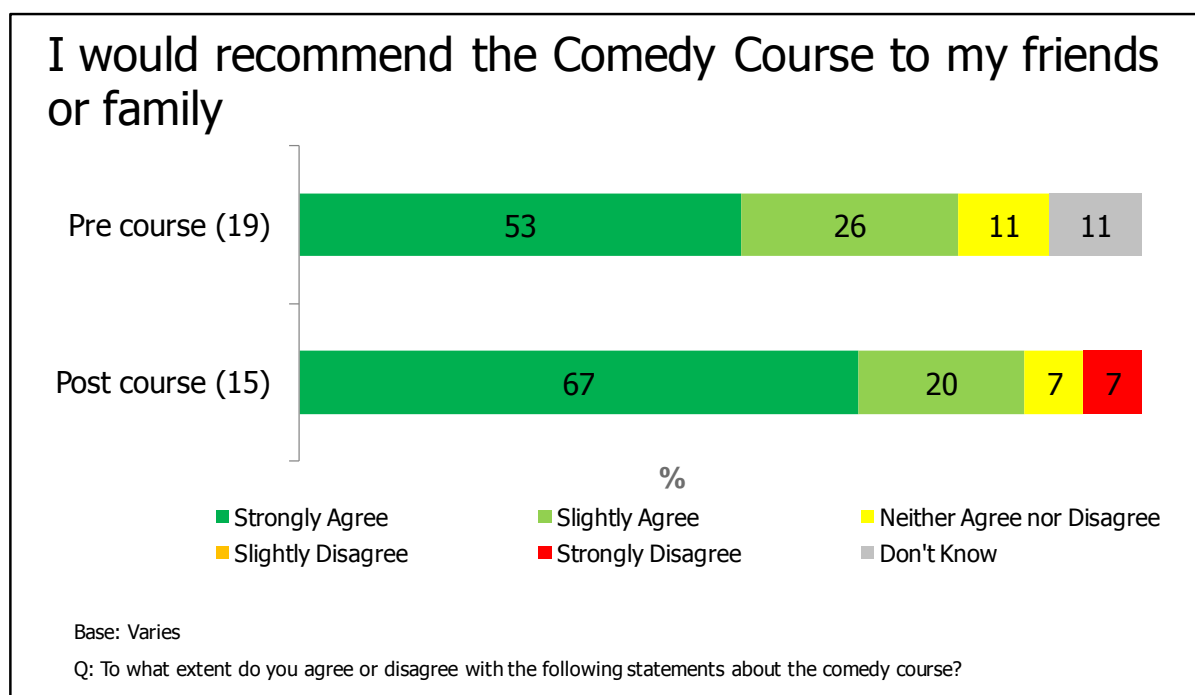
“I think it was long enough. I would have done more you know but it was enough to get us up on stage.”

“I’d have done more. I don’t know if the reason I would have liked to have done more is because I worked all my life up until I took ill and I don’t know if it was because it was something I was getting up to do. If there had been more I would have went.”

Other participants commented that the more their mental health improved the more they got out of the course so would therefore benefit from the courses running for a longer time.

High satisfaction with the course continued throughout the course and by the end of the course the percentage of respondents who stated that they would recommend the comedy course to their friends or family increased from 79% at the beginning of the course (53% strongly agreed, 26% slightly agreed) to 87% at the end of the course (67% strongly agreed, 20% slightly agreed) (Graph 8).

Graph 8: Participants who would recommend the Comedy Course



These high-level responses indicate the overall success of the Comedy Clinics. The rest of the report evaluates this success thematically.

Course Set-up, Content and Delivery

Some of the reasons for participants being highly satisfied by the course are likely to be due to the positive impacts the Comedy Course has had on them which are discussed in the next section of the evaluation. However, there are a number of things about how the project was set up and delivered that participants felt positively about and contributed to their high satisfaction.

For example, in the focus groups, participants mentioned that the fact that they could get to the venue of the course easily by public transport helped motivate them to attend the course. It took away a financial and social barrier to engagement which is vital for this client group and promoted social inclusion.

"We used to get the bus and it dropped us right outside."

"It was handy, and if the travel's handy it's a lot less stressful."

"You can get bus right to the end of the road there and walk down."

Participants from the second cohort also thought the venue was easy to find and there was cheap parking if they preferred to drive, which further broke down barriers to engagement.

"It's really easy to find."

"Parking isn't expensive."

Once at the venue, the fact that the venue was also light and airy with plenty of space to move around was also commented on being a positive element of the course and added to participant overall satisfaction with the course.

"I think the room is always important, the atmosphere and that. I think it always is."

"I like how light and airy the room is with all the windows."

Furthermore, the time of day at which the course took place and the regularity of the sessions were also seen as positive aspects of the course, again addressing barriers to engagement and promoting social inclusion by encouraging people to attend.

"We used to meet on a Wednesday at one o'clock – that was a good time."

"For me, the way my illness was and the medication I'm on, I'm really tired in the morning, really groggy, so this was a really good time. I could have all morning to wake up and actually get here on time."

Some participants said they would have enjoyed it if the course had been twice a week, but for others they felt once a week was enough for them to commit to or make time for, particularly if they were volunteering or looking for work.

"I'd have come if it was two days a week."

"I think once a week's enough."

"I would certainly liked to meet twice a week...even at the start of the course, twice a week...it's waiting that week, sometimes it felt a wee bit too long."

The flexible approach taken by staff was also mentioned by participants as an important part of the course and key to determining their overall satisfaction.

"You could leave when you wanted to; go to the bathroom and that."

"There wasn't really any pressure. It was more about what we wanted rather than what they wanted."

"There was no pressure, we done it because we wanted to do it."

This helped participants feel comfortable and relaxed.

Project Challenges and how they were overcome

Nevertheless, while there was overall satisfaction with the Comedy Course and how it was delivered as a whole, some of the workshop content presented challenges for a few participants.

An example given was that the nature of some of the exercises required participants to take on a character and how this was played out could make some people feel uncomfortable.

"I enjoyed the workshops. But sometimes I thought the improvisation got a bit rough. Like, people might push you by accident...I didn't like that bit of the improvisation. But I liked the rest of the improvisation; I really enjoyed that, and the workshop."

In addition, other participants found some of the activities themselves challenging as they lacked confidence in their skills and ability to undertake them which made them feel uncomfortable.

"I was talking to [another participant] and I didn't know them you know, and I felt, 'I wonder if I'm doing the right thing here?' You know."

Not feeling confident in their abilities to take part made some participants anxious and threatened their engagement in the project.

"It was putting me under a lot of pressure...and I don't need pressure in my head. Otherwise I won't do it."

"I don't think I came back the next week."

This was particularly true of participants trying to imagine themselves at the beginning of the project taking part in a Showcase performance in 10 weeks time.

"[Universal Comedy] frightened everybody, the first couple of weeks, when [Universal Comedy] was like, 'Right, by week 10 we need to put a show on!' And everybody was like, 'What? We won't be able to put a show on?' I think maybe if they'd left it until maybe week four or five, when we felt a bit more confident about things..."

Therefore, despite the overall enjoyment of the project, a challenge to the delivery of the project was ensuring participants remained engaged in the course.

While most participants did not stop attending as a result of these challenges, participants in the focus groups mentioned people from the taster workshops had felt uncomfortable taking part in the activities so they did not sign up to attend the 10 week workshops.

"She found it really embarrassing and didn't come back for the second half so I suppose it really depends in hospital what type of mood you are in."

Some participants felt that those who dropped out were not in a place personally where they could participate.

"I really enjoyed it...quite a few people left half way through the workshop, just because it wasn't for them or they were quite withdrawn, or in a depressive phase."

"He didn't like it because of the different characters in the group who talked a lot and he didn't feel he had enough to say so he stopped it coming."

"I think the hospital was a good way [to advertise the course], the only thing I would say is that there are quite a lot of people who are depressed in hospital and don't have the confidence to put themselves forward to go to the workshop."

On the whole, Universal Comedy staff managed the anxious feelings of participants to maintain their engagement. They did this to an extent by having a flexible approach to engagement, and giving participants the choice about how they would like to engage in the workshops.

"I went along thinking it would be a good structure to my week and maybe I will enjoy it but not necessarily do all of it and take part."

"I didn't feel comfortable but once I got here and started listening to people, I thought I could write a wee something. And listening to other people, I laughed, I laughed at other people and the stories they were telling."

This helped participants feel empowered to engage on their terms and feel comfortable about taking part.

“There wasn’t really any pressure. It was more about what we wanted rather than what they wanted.”

“There was no pressure, we done it because we wanted to do it.”

Staff also maintained engagement by supporting participants through the parts they found difficult and reassuring them that they were doing well.

“I found that any time you thought there was something difficult, they were there to help you through it.”

“They kept reassuring you, ‘you’ll be fine, you’ll be fine’, they were really good.”

“What I liked about it was we were all always told, ‘cause I always went on about that I was rubbish, but nobody was rubbish they tell you. It doesn’t matter what you do, it’s good.”

Staff were able to support participants by using their own skills and experience in comedy to develop participants’ skills and give constructive criticism. This is something participants really valued.

“I thought the comedians were really good...they were showing us how they used their skills to make humour...I felt privileged that such important comedians were taking the class.”

“They made suggestions for new material.”

“They were really dead helpful, ‘maybe if you said it this way it would be more funny’. They would never ever put you down; they always tried a different way of saying how you could say it to people.”

“Everything they said to you was very constructive.”

Using a variety of activities and exercises each week also helped to keep participants engaged because they weren’t worried about coming back if they missed a week as it was something new each week.

“Every week was different which was good so it was a fresh start so even if you hadn’t done your homework you weren’t missing out on things each week.”

The fact that staff were friendly and approachable as well as accepting and inclusive made participants feel valued and at ease and helped participants gain confidence in their abilities and helped them stay engaged.

“She’s got a good way of getting things out of people.”

“They were encouraging.”

“She takes a really nice way with everybody...just say for instance she gave us homework to do and we came in the next week and somebody

said they'd not done their homework, she would say, 'Right okay that's fine, can you think of anything right now?'"

"She would say, 'What do you think?' Everybody's feedback was important."

Therefore, even though some participants found the project challenging, staff on the whole were able to support participants through it. The feeling that Universal Comedy staff played an important role in keeping participants engaged was reiterated by Pat from GERA who was present at all of the first cohort workshops.

"The staff from Universal Comedy were excellent."

"I felt it was a good partnership – clients, Universal Comedy, myself. It was team work."

However, the successful maintenance of participant engagement was also aided by external staff like Pat. The participants in the first cohort found Pat's role helpful in stressful and challenging situations as she knew each person individually and she was there to listen to people and encourage them to remain engaged when they found the course challenging.

"She's been a great support!"

"I think talking about it, as well, helps."

For the second cohort, it was the project lead at Universal Comedy that took on this extra support role, offering individualised support when required.

Because the support offered by the Universal Comedy staff was vital in helping people stay engaged and feel able to take on challenges the project presented, participants reflected that care must be taken in ensuring that staff delivering courses like this have appropriate skills and qualities to do this.

"I think when Universal come to hiring people...they should look at people that are good with people, that can try and get the best out of them."

Due to the challenges some participants experienced undertaking the course, it took some people longer to engage fully in the project. However, at some point something acted as a catalyst. For some this was realising what they could get out of participating in the course and how much they enjoyed doing something creative.

"I was a bit dubious about it, the way it was going, and then [participant] got up and done her piece, and I thought, 'This is really funny.' And then [participant] done her piece, and I thought, 'This is getting good now,' you know."

"I quite enjoy it now it's getting somewhere, and it's quite good."

For others it was finding their inner strength in a supported environment to deal with and overcome their personal challenges in the course.

"I didn't realise that we would be doing the work, and cheering ourselves up. I didn't realise we had to put that effort in. I am glad that we did, you know, really glad."

"I was in a depressive stage when I actually went to do the course and I found it really difficult to come by myself but it has been really good for me...it was probably the best laugh that I have had."

"I suppose it's just putting yourself to the test really, isn't it?"

"It was kind of the thing was there, and it was up to you..."

Participants found pushing themselves in this way an empowering element of the course, which they really valued as they gained a sense of achievement.

"I know that when I came I felt quite depressed and self conscious. The task we had to do did encourage you to have to talk to people and I think for me it improved my confidence so maybe for someone who is depressed if they can get along to the workshop that's good."

"You set the goals."

"Conquer your fears."

"Achievement, that's the thing."

Therefore, a combination of people's own interest in creative activities as well as Universal Comedy's engagement, delivery and course content, were all key in gaining interest and engagement for the Comedy Course.

Suggested improvements

When participants were asked in the post-course survey what, if anything, Universal Comedy could do to make the Comedy Course better, 12 participants responded and all responses related to project delivery. Additional suggestions were highlighted in the focus groups.

Many participants said that nothing could be done better including four people from the survey.

"Nothing - it's great the way it is!"

However, the most common suggestion made by half of the respondents of the survey, was for the course to be longer.

"Course to be longer."

"I think they need longer to work on the things they work on."

"Do a follow up course."

This tied in with 80% of participants in the survey saying they would like to attend more comedy sessions. A focus group participant summed this up by saying that the course was a good length to get most people ready to present their material on stage at the Showcase but they would enjoy and gain value from having longer to further develop and hone their skills.

"I think it was long enough. I would have done more you know but it was enough to get us up on stage."

Other survey respondents suggested the course could be more localised, but it was not clear why, as no reason was given. It may be that participants wanted more people from the same area to attend or a closer venue, however more exploration is needed to verify this as no further detail was gleaned from the focus groups.

"More local."

"One area to go to it."

In addition, two respondents in the pre-course survey said that they would like more people to be involved in the workshops. This may reflect that attendance fluctuated weekly depending on people's mental health and the second cohort engaged fewer participants. However, these responses also reflect how much people enjoyed the course and feel others could also benefit from getting involved.

"Just to let people with different sense of humour to work together."

"Let more people onto the course and more workshops around Glasgow."

Additional suggestions included having a budget for props and costumes, and having a handout of different activities and how to work through them so people could use them again in the future. Some participants also wondered whether it would be valuable if some of the staff had a lived experience of a mental health problem *"because they kind of know where you're coming from."* Participants once again reiterated that having approachable and supportive staff was vital in making the course successful.

Finally, participants from the first cohort gained so much benefit from attending the course that they really did not want it to end. Therefore, the participants worked together to set up a weekly meeting to continue their comedy work together. Therefore, participant felt that having someone at each workshop and after the course ends would help people deal with transitioning as some find it a real come down after the course finishes.

Impact Evaluation

Participants were clear about the sort of impacts participating in the Comedy Course had on them which they expressed both in their responses to survey attitude statements and open questions, as well as in focus group discussions. The impact the Comedy Course had on participants is analysed thematically below answering to what extent the aims and objectives of the course have been met.

Summary

To help assess how the Comedy Course met the project aims and objectives participants were asked to answer a number of attitude statements in the pre and post-course survey to track changes in attitudes over time (Table 2). A high rate of agreement with the statements illustrates that the course objectives have been well met. Most statements showed high levels of agreement at the beginning of the course which illustrates the positive impact the Comedy Course had relatively quickly. Furthermore, all but one of the attitude statements saw an increased percentage of participant agreement at the end of the course illustrating further that the project objectives were met.

Each of the attitude statements are discussed in detail and in context in this section of the report.

Table 2: Summary of attitude statements

Summary table of attitude statements		
Attitude statements	% Agree	
	Pre ⁷	Post ⁸
I enjoyed the Comedy Course	95	100
Overall, I was satisfied with the Comedy Course	95	100
I feel happier after going to the Comedy Course	84	100
I learned new skills at the Comedy Course	74	100
I feel more confident after going to the Comedy Course	73	100
I would recommend the Comedy Course to my friends or family	79	87
I made new friends at the Comedy Course	58	86
I am looking forward to taking part in a performance at the end of the Comedy Course	69	85
I would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Comedy Course	84	80
I feel confident to look for paid or voluntary work	32	39

⁷ 19 responses

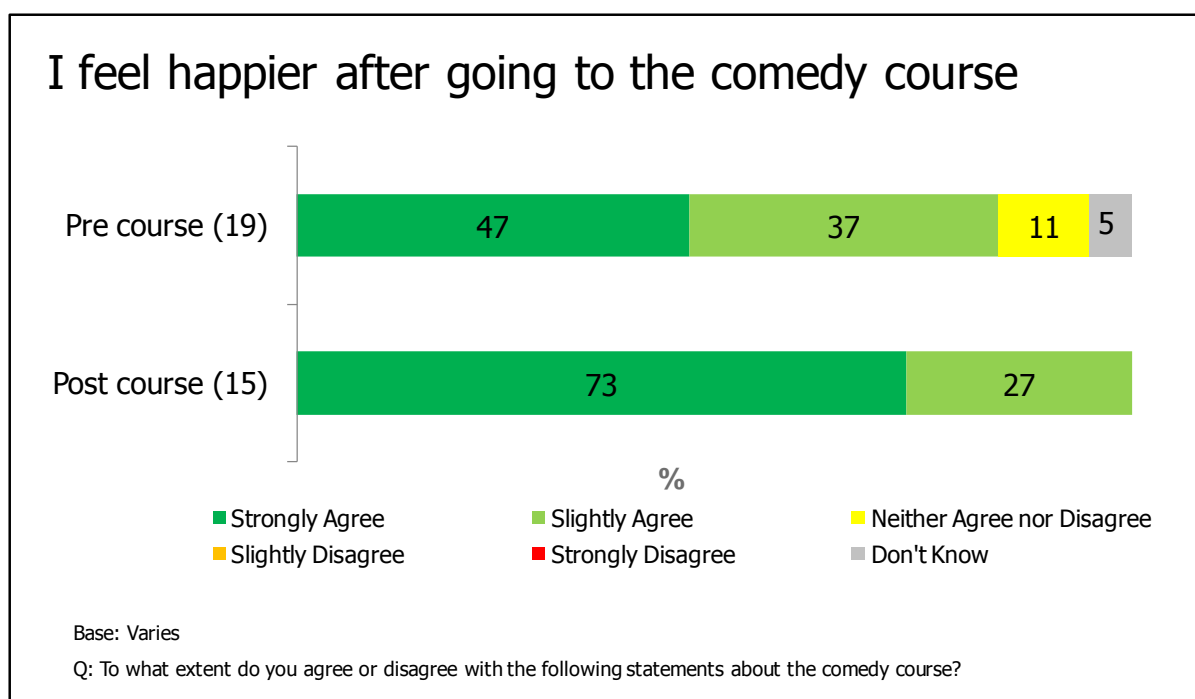
⁸ 15 responses

All 15 participants who took part in the post-course survey answered the questions on how coming to the Comedy Course made a difference to their life. Survey responses and focus group feedback are discussed thematically in this section of the report.

Improved Mood

The main aim of the Comedy Course was to improve the general mental health and wellbeing of participants. One way of assessing this was to see if attendance impacted on participant mood. In both the pre and post-course survey participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement “*I feel happier after going to the comedy course*”. After the first workshop 84% of respondents either strongly agreed (47%) or slightly agreed (37%) that they felt happier after going to the Comedy Course illustrating the positive impact on mood the Comedy Course was having at an early stage (Graph 9). By the end of the course this had risen to a 100% of respondents agreeing strongly (73%) or slightly (27%) that they felt happier after going to the Comedy Course indicating overwhelming success in improving participant mood.

Graph 9: Participants feeling happier after going to the Comedy Course



The positive impact attending the Comedy Course had on participants’ mood was further reiterated in open questions both within the survey and the focus groups. For example, the words participants of the focus groups used to describe what they got out of workshops included; “*Contentment*”, “*Happiness*” and “*Laughter*”.

“I can honestly say that I feel a million times better. I laugh a bit more, I smile a bit more.”

“Certainly happier doing this.”

Furthermore, in both the post-course survey and the focus groups, respondents were asked whether attending the Comedy Clinic Workshops had impacted on their day to day life. Participants found attending the Comedy Course uplifting and it allowed them to laugh at life again by not taking life so seriously.

"It's the old saying; humour...laughter's the best medicine..."

"I found it lifting...something to focus on, different. Instead of everything being serious in my life."

"It was something to get a wee laugh at, you know."

"I notice things that are dead funny now....I look at things and can see the funny side that I hadn't seen before."

"I can laugh now about things, and talk about things that when I was ill I didn't find one bit funny, I didn't find anything funny. But I feel it has helped my confidence...can talk about things that I never thought I would be able to do again."

Many of the comments made illustrated that the positive impacts the Comedy Course had on mood were sustained beyond the course workshops thus showing the courses potential to have long lasting impacts on participants.

"I see the funny side of life now. I can laugh at myself, whereas before I didn't think anything was funny at all. But now I see myself laughing at things, I do. I see myself singing doing the dishes, putting them away, singing. I just feel happier inside, you know."

"It helps with shyness, the confidence thing. You see a lighter side of things. That's what it is. And also the...we set ourselves a goal and we achieved it. And you kind of cram it into daily life. It's helped."

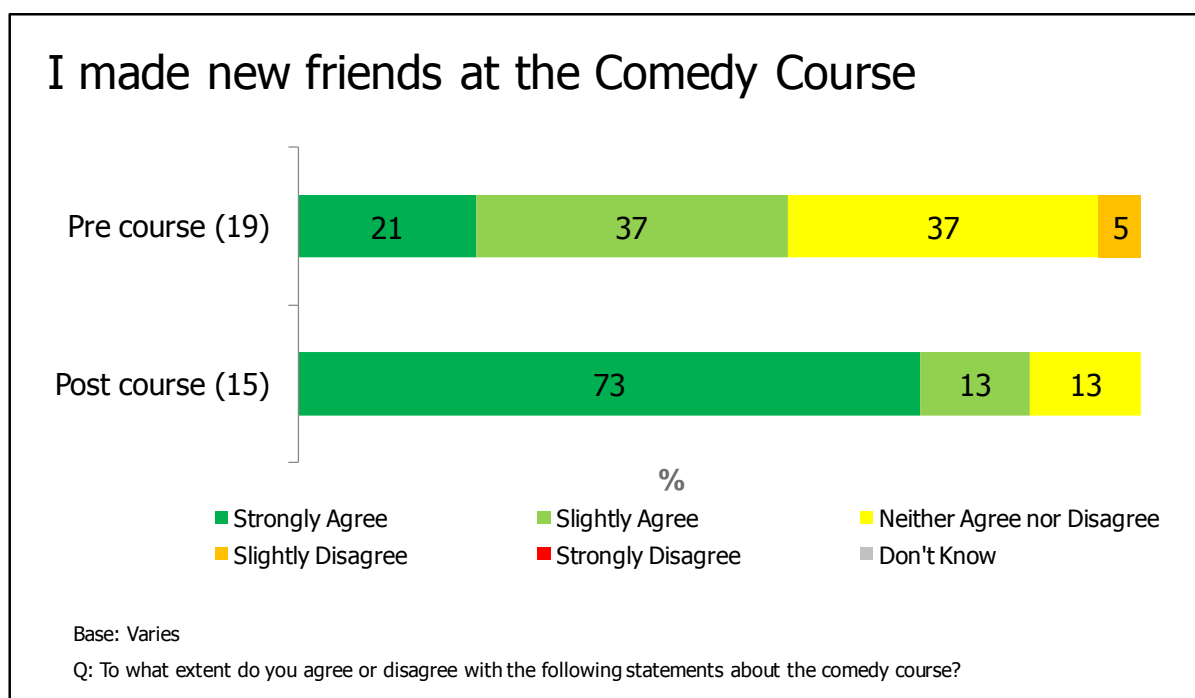
"I think it's really lifted the depression, and my husband particularly saw big differences in me...it's something that's bringing me back."

Making new friends

It is widely recognised in research literature that social relationships are important for positive mental health and wellbeing and so another of the project aims was to provide the opportunity for participants to build lasting friendships and support. This again was an aim that the evaluation has shown was successfully achieved.

In the pre- and post-course surveys participants were asked whether they had made new friends at the Comedy Course. At the start of the course just over half of respondents (58%) agreed strongly (21%) or slightly (37%) that they had made new friends at the Comedy Course (Graph 10). However, by the end of the course 86% of participants either strongly agreed (73%) or slightly agreed (13%) that they had made new friends at the course, the remaining 13% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Graph 10: Participants forming relationships at the Comedy Course



Building friendships was an important outcome of the course with participants mentioning it in the open questions of the surveys and in the focus groups.

“I’ve made new friends as well.”

“You meet people, and you enjoy doing what you’re doing. It’s like...expressing yourself in another way.”

Participants recognised that the friendships they developed as a result of attending the Comedy Course had a positive impact on their lives. Four participants of the post-course survey said that they felt that coming to the Comedy Course had made a difference in their life by helping them develop the skills and provide the opportunity to meet new people. This was an outcome participants had expressed at the beginning of the course that they hoped the Comedy Course would deliver.

“Meeting new people.”

“Meeting new friends.”

“Helps me have more confidence to make friends.”

“It has made me less nervous when conversing with people.”

“I enjoyed meeting people.”

The friendships created between participants were important in providing participants with additional support and for many led to a reduction in their sense of isolation. Reduced isolation and building social supports were thus additional project objectives that were successfully achieved by the Comedy Course.

"We all support each other, and we're always here for each other, you know, 'You'll be great, don't worry,' because I think everybody needs that sometimes, you know what I mean?"

"I think we all work well, we all support each other."

"We work together as a cohesive group."

"It's nice to get involved with people...Because we're all in the same boat, and we can all help one another and support one another."

"We all gave each other encouragement."

Increased Motivation

Building new friendships motivated some participants to stay engaged in the project, which helped reduce their isolation.

"I never wanted to go outside and this has got me out of the house, to meet people. I enjoy the company."

For some participants attending the Comedy Course increased their motivation as getting up and coming to the course was in itself an outcome.

"Easterhouse is like the other side of the city for us...Just to motivate yourself in that way and go every week was an achievement to me I think."

"Even just simple goals, just...getting up and getting washed and getting the shopping. Sometimes you just can't do it. If you try and think back, what you've achieved. It certainly can help."

"See when I got up on Tuesday morning, I had something to do...I got up and had a bath because I knew I had something to look forward to. The other six days of the week I'd get up and go about in my PJs; if I wasn't going outside the door they wouldn't come off. "

The Comedy Course helped provide some participants with a structure and purpose to their day which again motivated them to attend the Comedy Course and allowed them to gain positive outcomes from attending.

"It's given me something to look forward to."

"It has given me purpose to my day."

"I just wanted to sit back and let them entertain me, but with me having the motivation and having to put some work into it, I get more out of it. I get more reward, I've got happier, you know, and my depression has kind of left me."

"I came along supported by Carr-gomm at the beginning but all other weeks I came myself which was a big step. The course enabled me to

participate in a group setting, I didn't think I would be able to do this. It made me feel fine again and express myself. Made me relax, and laugh at sad things in my life."

"I loved the homework because I had something to do when I came home...it broke up the week for me."

Increased confidence

With improved mood, new friendships and enhanced motivation, came increased confidence. Eight respondents to the post-course survey said that attending the Comedy Course had made a difference to their life by improving their confidence and self esteem, an outcome that many participants had hoped the Comedy Course would achieve and a key project objective.

"I feel more confident within myself."

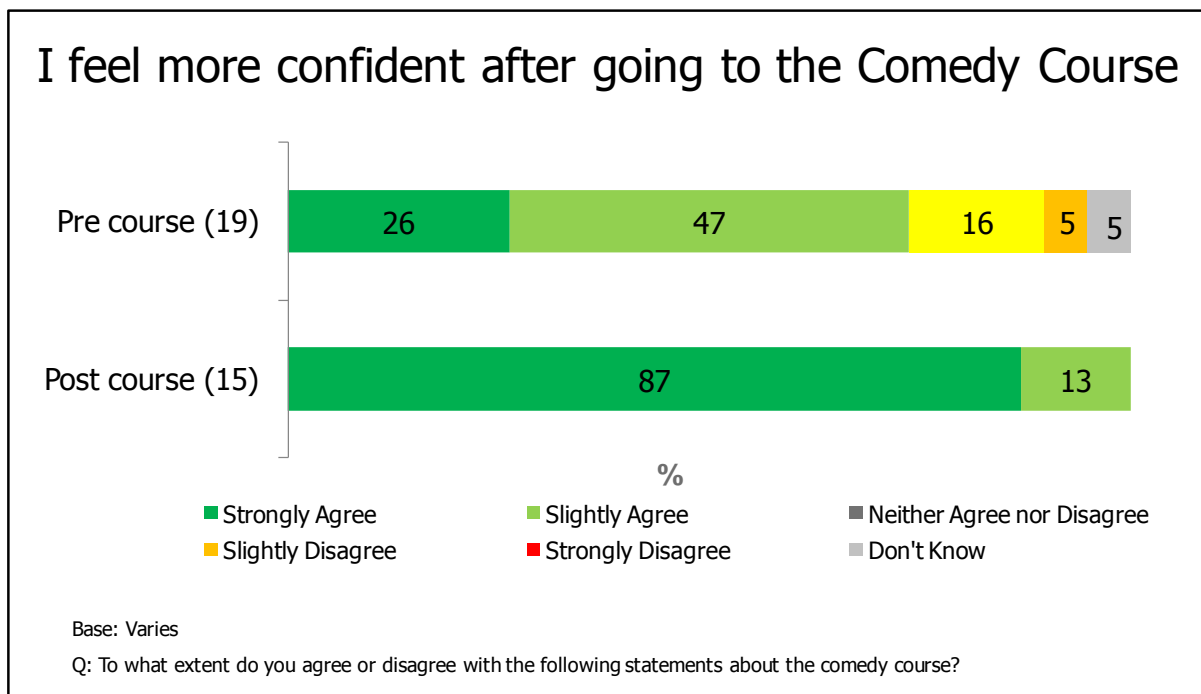
"It has given me confidence and esteem to talk in front of a group."

"I'm more confident and easy going now."

"Given a little more confidence and self esteem."

"It has given me my confidence back."

Graph 11: Increased confidence after going to the Comedy Course



This was further reiterated by the responses given to the attitude statement on confidence. When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I feel more confident after going to the comedy course", 73% of respondents to the pre-course survey either strongly agreed (26%) or slightly agreed (47%) with this statement (Graph 11). However by the end of the course 100% of respondents either

strongly agreed (87%) or slightly agreed (13%) to this statement highlighting the positive impact attending the Comedy Course had on participants confidence.

Increased confidence as a positive outcome of attending the Comedy Course also came out during focus group discussions.

“It’s built my confidence up.”

“It’ increased our confidence and made us motivated and made us happy.”

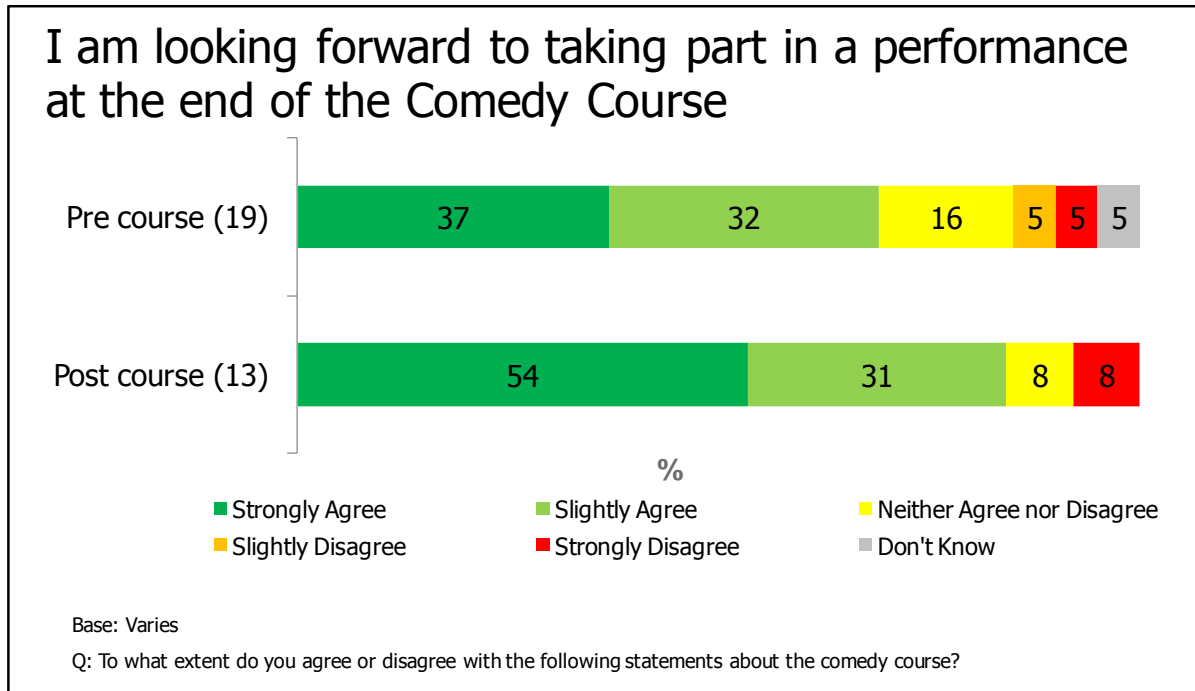
“It just lifted my confidence.”

“It’s just really boosted my confidence.”

The Showcase (feelings about the performance)

The way in which participants’ attitudes changed over time in regards to taking part in the Showcase illustrates how much their confidence had increased as a result of taking part in the course. At the start of the course two thirds (69%) of respondents agreed that they were looking forward to taking part in a performance at the end of the Comedy Course, 37% strongly agreed and 32% slightly agreed. However, by the end of the course 85% of participants were looking forward to the performance, 54% strongly agreed with this statement and 31% slightly agreed.

Graph 12: Looking forward to taking part in the showcase



The thought of doing a public performance felt overwhelming at first to many participants as they could not see how they would be able to achieve it.

"I think people start to get frightened, the first couple of weeks when we were going to the Comedy Workshop, and they were saying, 'Right by week 10, you need to put a show on!' And it was, like, 'Okay!'"

"I couldn't see it. I couldn't see it at first, I couldn't see how this was going to come about, you know."

However, once the classes progressed, and as people gained confidence and skills, people began to believe it was possible.

"We've all come up with great ideas every week, you know, we just write down stuff and try it out and see how it worked. Because we actually came up with the whole script on our own."

"It was good the way they said, for the first few weeks we're doing all different characters and just kind of getting to know each other and fitting in, and everybody's like, this...what we're going to do? You know what I mean? Instead of just going in the first day and saying, 'Right, we have to do this.' They kind of waited a couple of weeks and they build up."

Being shown a DVD of other course's showcases helped participants in the first cohort envisage what a show may look like:

"I think once he [Universal Comedy Staff] showed us the DVD's that he'd made of other groups that are doing the Comedy Workshop; they had done some sketches and made them funny, like paying for a taxi with empty ginger bottles instead of money. And he showed us these DVD's on the screen, and it made us think along the lines of, not more sketches, but more a sort of show. And we came up with a show, more than sketches. The sketches were really funny, and it gave us impetus to go for a really good show."

Therefore, while participants were nervous at the thought of putting on a showcase, by the end of the course most had gained enough confidence to go through with it.

"There were loads of times I wouldn't get up in front of people, and loads of times I walked out because I was freaking out too much, but it was good because there was that goal at the end of it. It was like 'now or never' kind of thing. If I don't do it now, you know, I won't do it. So it was exciting but it was a bit shaky, but no one judged you, because they're all kind of in the same boat."

"I actually said when they said that we would be doing a show at the end of it, I says, 'No way will I be doing anything.' I says to myself, you know! But it came about, so...it just shows you, you don't know what's round the corner."

Being able to stand up in front of an audience at the Showcase increased participants' confidence further by helping them achieve something they had not thought possible.

“Just actually doing it has given me a lot more confidence onstage.”

“I spoke about Universal Comedy [to a support worker]. I said I can’t believe I went up on stage, six months ago you probably wouldn’t have got me out my front door...I would recommend it to anybody.”

“I know I’ll never make a living out of writing or anything like that but I thought I really achieved something big doing that [performing on stage], really did...because I never ever in my whole life thought that I could ever go up onto a stage and do that, ever, even before I was ill.”

“Even my friend said to me we all can’t believe you are going up there to go on a stage because see before you took ill, you probably would have never have done that.”

In addition, taking part in the Showcase lifted people’s mood and enhanced their social skills.

“I got a bit of a buzz...I just felt so good.”

“I felt able to talk to people...I just felt a good communicator while normally I am quite quiet and withdrawn and self focussed, worrying about my appearance and whether I look like an ill person, whereas there was nothing of that that night [the Showcase] which was really nice...the comedians were really supportive, hugely supportive on the night.”

Participants’ self confidence and self belief was also enhanced by taking part in the Showcase (and the course as a whole) as they gained recognition from others for both the quality of the material they produced and the positive changes it had made in people.

“I wrote a speech...it gets a good laugh every time I tell it, you know...everybody says ‘that’s really good.’ And I showed it to one guy in the pub the other day, and he looked at it and says, ‘Did you write that?’ And I says, ‘Aye.’ And he says, ‘That’s really good!’”

“My family came to the first show...my mum and my brother, and my wee sister, came and said it was great, they really enjoyed it, thoroughly enjoyed it.”

“I really made people laugh and it was such a nice feeling that I thought, you know this, a wee bit of me is back...it was a real confidence boost.”

“It’s a good feeling.”

“It boosts your confidence.”

“He [family member] did say he was really proud of me and it was showing something of what I used to be like.”

Therefore, for all that took part in the Showcase at the end of the course, there was a unanimous agreement that the Showcase was an important part of the course in improving confidence and giving participants something to aim for.

"I've always liked to have tried stand-up, so you are aiming towards it. It was good because it was quite a friendly crowd and if you had just gone on your own you would have to start in pubs and you just need one bad audience and they could crush you. This way you at least got to work on your stuff and try it out and you knew when you had to do it."

"I was scared that they would boo...but I thought no, I'm going to do it...a gentleman came up to me and said you were very very good."

"Someone from the audience, he said, 'so that's a true story?', and I said 'yes', and he said 'it was so good I might take it for myself and use it'."

Some participants chose not to perform in the Showcase but instead got one of the comedians to read out a piece they had written. They too got value from this level of participation as it was a great achievement for them and they gained the same recognition as the other participants.

Self Identity

Attending the Comedy Course and the Showcase also helped participants feel like "themselves" again, feeling as if they had regained their sense of identity.

"I managed to get my personality back."

"This is what I wanted to get back to; being the silly funny person I used to be. And I'm getting there, and I definitely enjoy coming here."

"I think it's probably brought more of my personality out."

Regaining a sense of self and personal identity and feeling happier as a result was aided by the way the group was set up. Some participants' fed-back that they felt comfortable going the Comedy Course for the first time because they knew everyone had experienced mental health problems.

"That [all having an experience of mental health problems] took the judgement away...many times of the day I walked out, but I knew that the guys wouldn't judge me because they knew what I was going through."

"They're [other participants] not judging you, we're all in the same kind of boat."

"We're kind of all the same, so no one's judging anyone when you're up there. So it was...a lot of confidence here, personal confidence, and group confidence as well, I think, at the end when we all got it."

This feeling of acceptance helped people get even more out of attending the Comedy Course as they felt comfortable to be themselves.

“I feel a wee bit more confident in myself...because in the group I feel I can speak and nobody is judging me.”

“This workshop here has given me a lot of confidence to feel okay in my own skin. Not be worrying what I look like...Doing this course has really help me come out of my shell and I think it has helped other aspects of my life. It was really nice as well that my husband liked what I did, and it’s just a small thing but to hear him say that he was really proud of me was really nice.”

Reduction in stigma

When asked whether participants thought that taking part in the Comedy Clinic Course helped to reduce the stigma they felt, many respondents felt that it did. Participants felt that taking part in the Comedy Course helped people see them differently, which reduced stigmatising views of mental health problems.

“I think when you tell people what you’re doing it does take the...I won’t say it takes the stigma away, but it certainly removes it a wee bit. When you say, ‘this is what we’re doing, and this is what the guys are doing.’”

“They seem to look up to you a wee bit more don’t they?”

“As if to say, ‘we cannot believe that you put all that together.’ Because we put all the scripting on it together as well, and they’re just like...I think they look at us in a different light don’t they.”

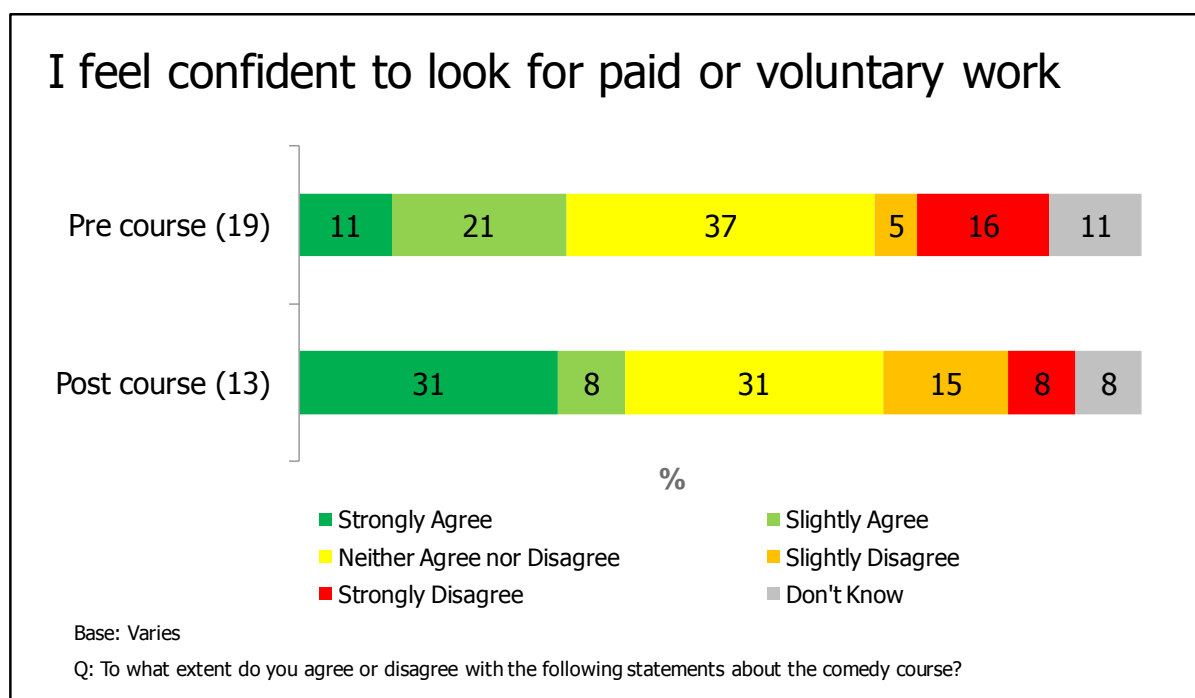
“We do feel that people look at us in a different light now we’ve done the comedy thing. You know, because I think they think, ‘Oh these are people that suffer from mental health issues, and they can do it,’ and obviously it encourages other people with mental health problems to give it a bash.”

Employability and learning new skills

Ten out of 15 respondents responded to the question in the post-course survey about how coming to the Comedy Course has improved their employment prospects (Universal Comedy did not include this question in three respondents surveys).

Six out of the ten responses stated that it hadn’t improved their employment prospects yet or they didn’t know how it had. Uncertainty about how attending the Comedy Course had improved their employment prospects was reiterated in the low percentage of participants agreeing with the statement “I feel confident to look for paid or voluntary work”; only 32% of participants agreed strongly (11%) or slightly (21%) with this statement at the beginning of the course and only a marginally higher 39% of participants strongly (31%) or slightly (8%) at the end of the course. Approximately a third of respondents neither agreed nor disagreeing further indicating participant uncertainty of this impact (Graph 13).

Graph 13: Comedy Course helping increase confidence to look for work



However, some participants recognised that the confidence and skills they learnt as a result of attending the project had improved their employment prospects and gave the following responses to the question “How was coming to the Comedy Course improved your employment prospects?”.

“More confidence to get qualifications.”

“I have a much better chance of expressing myself.”

“Learning new skills, confidence.”

“I am more confident.”

In addition, in response to the question, “How has coming to the Comedy Course made a difference to your life?” one respondent explicitly mentioned that it had helped them find employment.

“I have now got a new part-time job and am delighted.”

Furthermore, some of the people who dropped out of the course did so because they had got a job and could no longer attend the course, which was therefore not captured in the focus groups of surveys.

The view that Universal Comedy could help participants gain employment was a view also held by external partners like Pat at GERA who observed that Universal Comedy helped her clients to gain valuable skills for the workplace.

“Where do we start with workplace skills? The list is endless... leadership, money management... and the soft skills, their confidence increased.”

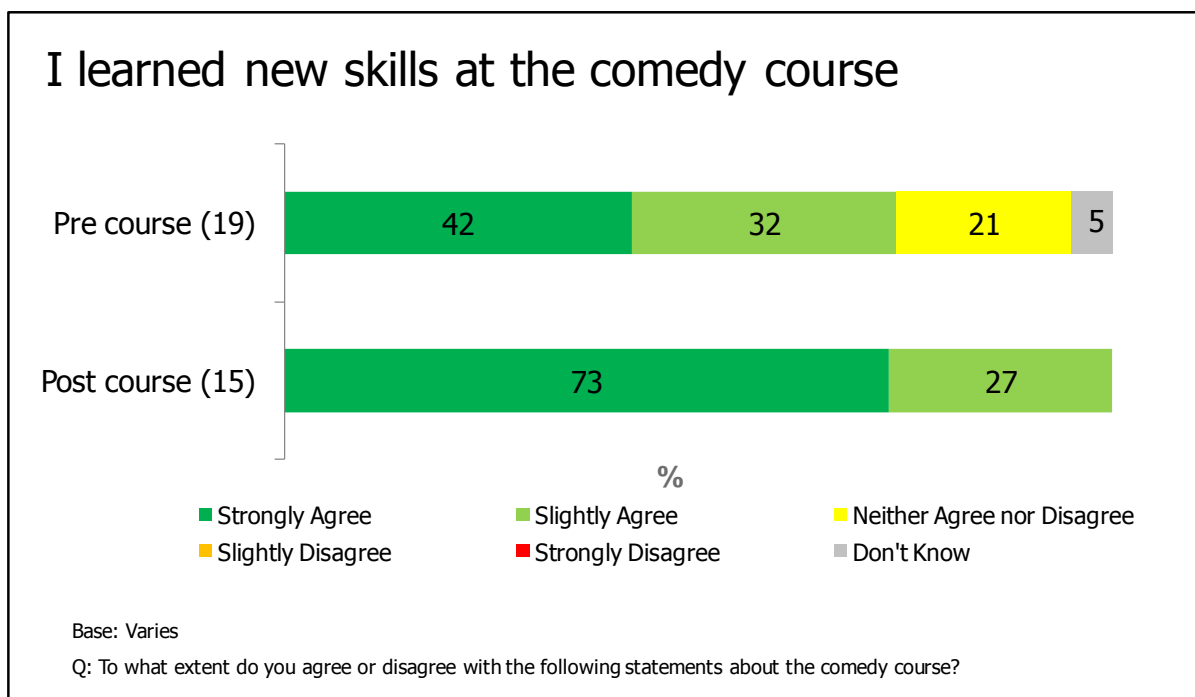
This was evidenced by progress along the employability pathway for some of her clients who were participants of the Comedy Course.

“One of the ladies got a job and another went back to uni.”

In addition to helping participants gain employment, another aim of the Comedy Course was to help participants learn new skills and enhance their aspirations for themselves. Learning new skills was another objective of the Comedy Course which the evaluation has shown was successfully achieved.

Approximately three quarters (74%) of respondents to the pre-course survey either strongly agreed (42%) or slightly agreed (32%) that they learned new skills on the first day of the Comedy Course. By the end of the course 100% of respondents either strongly agreed (73%) or slightly agreed (27%) that they had learned new skills at the Comedy Course (Graph 14).

Graph 14: Learning new skills as a result of the Comedy Course



Many participants also recognised that learning new skills aided personal development in many aspects of their lives, not just comedy.

“I think because I was doing stand up and I’ve never ever done it in my life before...I think when you get outside your comfort zone like that...stand in front of people and try to make them laugh. I think it’s really, really quite hard to do, so I was really a bag of nerves about doing that. And I think I’ve even developed from the beginning until now. I think I’m a bit funnier...”

“I think good presentation skills, because I used to be really shy on stage...I found it really difficult to speak to an audience...I’ve overcome that now, you know, the fear. You know, just speaking to people like...so to me I’ve overcome one of my worst fears.”

"It's helped me with my shyness, and my presentation."

"I find I'm not as embarrassed about things now as I used to be, you know, I was very into myself, and I find I can do things for people. And my life has slowed down. Everything was done at a hundred mile an hour as if I wanted to get to the end of life, you know, and now I've slowed it down and I'm enjoying it."

This has further led to participants feeling able to access other opportunities to enhance their lives.

"I find it's opened up new opportunities for me really...I'm going along with Universal Comedy and speaking to people with mental health problems to encourage them that it's not the end of the line for you, you know what I mean? You can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"For me it has given me the opportunity when other workshops have come up I've said yes to them."

For some participants the impact the Comedy Course had on them was something that they would like to sustain longer term.

"I thought it was just for the first six weeks. I didn't realise that it was going to be part of my life, if you know what I mean. Because we've done the play in quite a few places. I thought it was just a course running for six weeks, but it's still going on."

"We basically want to keep it going now, keep it going and develop it!"

External View of Impact

To supplement the data gathered from participants in the Comedy Course, Pat from GERA was interviewed about the impacts on participants she observed by attending the workshops.

Pat observed that participants experienced social impacts and changes to their attitudes and wellbeing.

"Peer support, self confidence, fun, something to laugh at."

"The attitude is that they can do it, that there is hope there. They didn't have that before."

These changes were noticeable in individuals, and were thought to be likely to have long-lasting impacts.

"[Observing the difference in one client, I was the] most satisfied I've been in my working life – she said she's got her personality back."

"I think that if you went back to the clients in three years they'll still be able to associate Universal Comedy with the good feelings they had."

Alongside this, Pat observed that the physical change in people was also apparent.

“Physical changes as well as attitude. Have you ever seen people with the weight of the world on their shoulders? Now they have head up and shoulders back. We should have taken photos at the beginning and end to see the difference!”

Pat got a lot of satisfaction from the progress that her clients made with Universal Comedy.

“It was absolutely amazing to see, I’ve never seen anything like that.”

“I’m so proud of them.”

Pat therefore hopes that Universal Comedy will continue its work in the future.

“I really hope it goes on and on and upward because it has done amazing things for the group I work with.”

Sustainability is therefore a concern, but Pat has been working with her clients to ensure that the group continues to meet independently and they have been engaged to undertake more performances.

“They had a gig at Glasgow City Chambers – it was fantastic. They were on their own, got themselves there, and did their practice.”

However, Pat feels it is important that sources of support such as Universal Comedy are time limited.

“Universal Comedy has a start, a middle and an end which I very much advocate. Otherwise it would create a dependency.”

Going Forward

Comedy graduate

To help participants to continue to develop beyond the duration of the course Universal Comedy are creating a peer support ‘comedy graduate’ and advocacy programme which aims to encourage course participants to be more confident in vocalising their opinions on treatment and to get involved more generally in supporting new people joining the courses. Everyone in the focus groups thought the comedy graduate was a good idea and one person is already involved:

“One I did last week, there was a woman come up and she’s got MS and you could see she was suffering from a lot of things. And after I’d spoken she came up and she was like, ‘I’m doing the Comedy Workshop and I’m only two weeks in, I’m never going to be as good as you,’ and I said, ‘Well don’t say that, because this is only week two.’ I said, ‘I never thought I would get where I am today,’ and I said, ‘You know, you just keep battling through it.’ And there was another woman who came up, and because I

talk about my manic episodes, and she came up and she was talking about one of her manic episodes...she found it comfortable to come up and say that to me. But she probably wouldn't have felt comfortable to speak to anybody else about it so even just that, they're getting that..."

"I just feel they really need to get it out there, sell it."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participant feedback via pre- and post-course surveys and two focus groups have shown that Universal Comedy has been successful in achieving intended mental health and wellbeing outcomes for participants in the 10 week Comedy Course and Showcase Events. The mental health and wellbeing of participants was improved in a range of ways including:

- Building friendships and support;
- Reduced isolation;
- Higher life aspirations;
- Improved confidence and self esteem;
- Increased motivation;
- Regained sense of self and identity;
- Encouragement into learning and employment;
- Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination through the Showcase;
- Improved mood;
- Developing new skills both artistic and social;
- Improved mental health and condition management.

By talking about their experience of participating in the project participants were able to identify those factors that have helped the project work well, as well as identify a number of challenges that have arisen during the process.

An important contributing factor for the success of the projects was the comedians who delivered the course. Participants felt they were non-judgemental, encouraging, and approachable. Of particular benefit to participants was the continual positive feedback that they provide to help participants get the most out of the workshops and which helped them to stay engaged. Staff were also skilled in ensuring that they supported participants to help themselves. They passed on new skills and encouraged participants to develop their own skills. All of the above assisted many participants in developing the skills and confidence they needed to take part in the Showcase Event at the end of the course which further boosted their confidence and self belief.

In addition, of particular note was the success of Universal Comedy in engaging its target audience. By ensuring that the course was easily accessible, free, at an appropriate time, open to all abilities and experience and delivered in a supportive way, it was able to address social and health inequalities and successfully engaged people experiencing mild to moderate and severe and enduring mental health problems.

Other features that helped the projects to be successful included:

- Using a range of methods to promote and raise awareness about the project to try and reach the target group and gain the buy-in of referrers;
- Gaining the buy-in of referrers who acted as local champions to encourage referrals and support participants to stay engaged;
- Offering taster workshops so participants could come and try the course before committing to it;

- Delivering a high quality varied and adaptable course which motivated and engaged participants;
- Offering a variety of activities to encourage continued engagement and inclusion;
- Creating a fun and safe atmosphere;
- Providing free access to the project;
- Being based in a venue that was easily accessible by public transport;
- Making the course accessible in terms of the time it was run and the accessibility of the venue;
- Ending with a Showcase which gave participants something to work towards.

For participants the key challenge associated with participating in the projects was having the confidence to take that first step of engaging or feeling intimidated by the activities involved. Participants reflected that they were helped to overcome these issues by staff and peers. However, without feedback from those who dropped out or who didn't engage to start with, it would be difficult to know if further challenges exist.

Overall, participants recognised what they have got out of being part of the projects and saw value in the project continuing, both for themselves and others.

Recommendations

Based on the good practice identified through the evaluation findings, a range of recommendations for other organisations who want to develop similar projects are set out below.

These recommendations are of particular relevance to those setting up and running successful projects which aim to engage with people with mental health problems to support their recovery, build their capacity to self manage, and promote their social inclusion. However, these recommendations are also relevant for anyone who wants to engage with isolated groups and deliver a project which promotes mental health improvement and build confidence, self-esteem and higher aspirations amongst participants.

Some recommendations for a successful project are:

- Use a variety of methods to advertise and engage participants to effectively reach the target group and help maximise engagement;
- Where possible, have a referral partner organisation(s) who can help with recruitment and maintaining engagement;
- Running taster workshops can help potential participants see what is involved before committing to a course and can help encouraging attendance;
- Use prior knowledge or conduct research to identify potential barriers to access and from this decide on appropriate days, times and running time for target groups and where the activities should be based;

- Identify and develop ways to break down barriers to engagement for participants (e.g. offering project for free, accessible by public transport, at appropriate times of day);
- Where possible, a venue should be local or easily accessible by public transport;
- Employ appropriate staff that can effectively engage and motivate participants in a supportive and non-judgmental manner;
- Maintain a flexible approach to working, ready to adapt plan if necessary and allowing participants to engage in a way they feel comfortable;
- Deliver a programme of activities that can be accessed by people of varying abilities to promote social inclusion;
- Put in place an exit strategy/pathway for participants once the project finishes;
- Consider building in an opportunity for family and friends to see work to help reduce stigma and discrimination;
- Build in evaluation to evidence the successful delivery of outcomes.

The Universal Comedy Clinics have been very successful in meeting its aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of participants by supporting their recovery, condition management and building skills to enhance learning and employment opportunities. Therefore, recommendations for commissioners are to:

- Acknowledge the mental health benefits of the Comedy Clinics in aiding recovery and condition management, promoting mental health improvement more generally and developing skills to enhance employment opportunities.
- As a result, Comedy Clinics should be widely accessible to people experiencing mental health problems and people experiencing poor mental health or low self confidence.
- The success of the Comedy Clinics adds to the growing evidence based that supports participating in the arts as beneficial in promoting good mental health and wellbeing which is valued by participants. Therefore, future mental health strategies should reflect the value that service users place on participating in the arts such as the Comedy Clinics in supporting their recovery and the additional benefits they receive by engaging with participatory arts programmes.
- Participatory arts programmes have been highlighted by service users as something valuable that could be funded through Self Directed Support funds to improve their mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, good quality arts programmes like the Comedy Clinics should be made available to those who need it by providing sustainable funding.

APPENDIX 1: Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Taster session)



Evaluation of Universal Comedy

Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health is an independent organisation conducting an evaluation of Universal Comedy. We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions below about the *Taster Comedy Clinic* that you have attended today.

All of your answers are completely confidential, we do not ask for your name on this questionnaire.

Which workshop did you attend?

Name of workshop:

Workshop leader:

Date of workshop:

Please could you tell us a bit about your experience of attending the Taster Comedy Clinic today?

Which of the following parts of the Taster Comedy Clinic are you most interested in?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning about comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Building my confidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Writing comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning new skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Performing comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Being creative | <input type="checkbox"/> | Meeting new people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Something else | | |

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Taster Comedy Clinic?

- I enjoyed the Taster Comedy Clinic today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I learned new skills at the Taster Comedy Clinic today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I feel happier after going to the Taster Comedy Clinic today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I feel more confident after going to the Taster Comedy Clinic today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

- I made new friends at the Taster Comedy Clinic today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

- Overall, I was satisfied with the Taster Comedy Clinic today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

- I would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Taster Comedy Clinic

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

- I would recommend the Taster Comedy Clinic to my friends or family

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

How do you feel after attending the Taster Comedy Clinic today?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What, if anything, could Universal Comedy do to make the Taster Comedy Clinic better?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Finally – would you please tell us a little about yourself?

Please note that you do not have to answer these questions, but if you do it will be of great value for the evaluation.

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Age

- Under 16
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

Where do you live?

- Glasgow [area]
- Glasgow [area]
- Glasgow [area]
- Glasgow [area]
- Glasgow [area]

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

- I am currently employed, and working full time
- I am currently employed, and working part time
- I am currently unemployed, and have been for less than six months
- I am currently unemployed, and have been for more than six months

Which of the following best describes you?

- I have personally experienced a mental health problem
- I have not personally experienced a mental health problem
- Prefer not to say

What would you have been doing today if you had not come to the Taster Comedy Clinic?

.....

.....

.....

Had you heard of Universal Comedy before you heard about the Taster Comedy Clinic?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, your comments are very much appreciated.

APPENDIX 2: Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Pre-course)



Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Pre-course)

Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health is an independent organisation conducting an evaluation of Universal Comedy. We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions below about the *Comedy Course* that you have attended today.

All of your answers are completely confidential, we do not ask for your name on this questionnaire.

Which workshop did you attend?

Name of workshop:

Workshop leader:

Date of workshop:

Please could you tell us a bit about your experience of attending the Comedy Course today?

Which of the following parts of the Comedy Course are you most interested in?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning about comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Building my confidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Writing comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning new skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Performing comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Being creative | <input type="checkbox"/> | Meeting new people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Something else..... | | |

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Comedy Course?

- I enjoyed the Comedy Course today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I learned new skills at the Comedy Course today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I feel happier after going to the Comedy Course today

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[] [] [] [] [] []

- I feel more confident after going to the Comedy Course today

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I made new friends at the Comedy Course today

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I feel confident to look for paid or voluntary work

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- Overall, I was satisfied with the Comedy Course today

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I am looking forward to taking part in a performance at the end of the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I would recommend the Comedy Course to my friends or family

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

What do you hope to get out of coming to the Comedy Course sessions?

.....
.....
.....
.....

What, if anything, could Universal Comedy do to make the Comedy Course better?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Finally – would you please tell us a little about yourself?

Please note that you do not have to answer these questions, but if you do it will be of great value for the evaluation.

Gender

- Male Female Prefer not to say

Age

- Under 16 35-44 65+
 16-24 45-54 Prefer not to say
 25-34 55-64

Where do you live?

- Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area]
 Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area]

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

- I am currently employed, and working full time
 I am currently employed, and working part time
 I am currently unemployed, and have been for less than six months
 I am currently unemployed, and have been for more than six months

Which of the following best describes you?

- I have personally experienced a mental health problem
 I have not personally experienced a mental health problem
 Prefer not to say

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, your comments are very much appreciated.

APPENDIX 3: Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Post-course)



Evaluation of Universal Comedy (Post-course)

Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health is an independent organisation conducting an evaluation of Universal Comedy. We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions below about the *Comedy Course* that you have attended over the last few weeks.

All of your answers are completely confidential, we do not ask for your name on this questionnaire.

Which workshop did you attend?

Name of workshop:

Workshop leader:

Date of workshop:

Please could you tell us a bit about your experience of attending the Comedy Course sessions as a whole?

Which of the following parts of the Comedy Course have you found most interesting?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning about comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Building my confidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Writing comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning new skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Performing comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Being creative | <input type="checkbox"/> | Meeting new people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Something else | | |

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Comedy Course?

- I enjoyed the Comedy Course

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I learned new skills at the Comedy Course

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I feel happier after going to the Comedy Course

Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[] [] [] [] [] []

- I feel more confident after going to the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I made new friends at the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I feel confident to look for paid or voluntary work

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- Overall, I was satisfied with the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I am looking forward to taking part in a performance at the end of the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I would like to attend more comedy sessions like the Comedy Course

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

- I would recommend the Comedy Course to my friends or family

Strongly agree [] Slightly agree [] Neither agree nor disagree [] Slightly disagree [] Strongly disagree [] Don't know []

How has coming to the Comedy Course made a difference to your life?

.....
.....
.....

How has coming to the Comedy Course improved your employment prospects?

.....
.....
.....

What, if anything, could Universal Comedy do to make the Comedy Course better?

.....
.....
.....

Finally – would you please tell us a little about yourself?

Please note that you do not have to answer these questions, but if you do it will be of great value for the evaluation.

Gender

- Male Female Prefer not to say

Age

- Under 16 35-44 65+
 16-24 45-54 Prefer not to say
 25-34 55-64

Where do you live?

- Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area]
 Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area] Glasgow [area]

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

- I am currently employed, and working full time
 I am currently employed, and working part time
 I am currently unemployed, and have been for less than six months
 I am currently unemployed, and have been for more than six months

Which of the following best describes you?

- I have personally experienced a mental health problem
 I have not personally experienced a mental health problem
 Prefer not to say

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, your comments are very much appreciated.

APPENDIX 4: Focus group discussion guide

Requirements for session:

- Cardboard for name signs
- Consent forms
- Biro
- Digital Recorder

MHF Intro	<p>Many thanks for giving up your time to help us with this research project. The session will probably take about an hour and a half.</p> <p>I am Hannah Biggs and I work at the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health, in Edinburgh.</p> <p>We are currently working with Universal Comedy to evaluate their Comedy Clinic courses. We want to speak to people who have participated in the Comedy courses to find out a bit about their experiences. So this is why we are here today!</p> <p>We'll start by talking about your experiences of getting involved with the Comedy Clinic course, and towards the end we'll play a couple of little games. These are just ways of helping you to be creative and think about things in a new way. You'll see what I mean later!</p> <p>MHF is an independent organisation and this is independent research so this means you don't need to worry about offending us with your answers! Please answer as honestly as you can. You might not be surprised to hear I have a list of questions to cover today, so please don't be offended if I move you on to another subject. However it isn't about me, it is about your thoughts and experiences so please do talk to each other and feel free to ask each other questions to make this a real discussion. But don't talk over each other, let everyone have their say.</p> <p>If it is ok with you we will tape the session but don't worry we are the only ones who will hear the tape and you will not be personally identified in the report we write at the end. (Sign consent forms)</p> <p>Direct to drinks, toilets, fire exits etc.</p>	5 mins
General intro	<p>It would be good to get to know each other a bit and I've not met you all before. Could we go round and each say a little bit about ourselves? I'll start.</p>	5 mins

	[TURN ON RECORDING DEVICE AFTER INTRODUCTIONS]	
Making contact / Referrals / Recruitment	<p>Let's start at the beginning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you first hear about the Comedy course? What did you hear / see? (<i>Leaflets, posters, referral, word of mouth etc</i>) • What happened next? What info or help did they give you before you came to the taster session? (<i>How did this work? Was it enough / the right kind of info / help?</i>) - <i>Is there a way you would prefer to receive this information?</i> • How did you feel before you came to the taster session? How did you feel afterwards? Was it as you expected? What did you expect of the taster? • Why did you decide to attend the full course? Was it as you expected? What did you expect of the taster? 	10 mins
Organisation	<p>What do you think about the set up of the Comedy Clinic course?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time of day • The location / rooms • The frequency / number of sessions can go to • The type of activities involved • The journey (Taster sessions / comedy clinic course / showcase) 	10 mins
The activities	<p>Let's think about the comedy activities that you have been working on in your sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been your experience of the Taster session/Comedy course/Showcase Event? • What have you particularly enjoyed or found positive about comedy? • What has been more difficult or problematic? <p>PROMPT: Links to <i>EMPLOYABILITY, RECOVERY, CONDITION MANAGEMENT, STIGMA</i></p>	10 mins
The impacts	<p>Let's think about the impact that taking part in the Taster sessions, Comedy course and the Showcase Event has on you [PERSONAL, SOCIAL, BEHAVIOURAL, EMPLOYMENT, RECOVERY]</p>	15 mins

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you particularly enjoy or find positive about taking part in the elements of the Comedy course? <p>PROMPTS – EMPLOYABILITY, RECOVERY, CONDITION MANAGEMENT, DISCRIMINATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Friendship</i> • <i>Support</i> • <i>Reduced isolation</i> • <i>Higher aspirations</i> • <i>Confidence</i> • <i>Self worth/esteem</i> • <i>Creates opportunities</i> • <i>Personal identity</i> • <i>Learned new skills</i> • <i>Encouragement into learning and employment</i> • <i>Improved condition management</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did attending / participating in the different elements of the Comedy course make you feel? (Prompt particularly on expectations and experience of the showcase) • What has been more difficult or problematic? • What would enhance or improve the experience? 	
The legacy	<p>Let's think about the way that that taking part in the Taster sessions, Comedy course and the Showcase Event might affect you in the future [PERSONAL, SOCIAL, BEHAVIOURAL, EMPLOYMENT, RECOVERY, TACKLING STIGMA / DISCRIMINATION]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has participating in the course/comedy changed you in any way? • If you had to say one thing that you personally had really got out of joining the Comedy course, what would it be? • Has there been any impact on your recovery? Before or after? 	15 mins

	<p>PROMPTS – EMPLOYABILITY, RECOVERY, CONDITION MANAGEMENT, TACKLING STIGMA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Friendship</i> • <i>Support</i> • <i>Reduced isolation</i> • <i>Higher aspirations</i> • <i>Confidence</i> • <i>Self worth/esteem</i> • <i>Creates opportunities</i> • <i>Personal identity</i> • <i>Learned new skills</i> • <i>Encouragement into learning and employment</i> • <i>Improved condition management</i> 	
Improvements	<p>What would enhance or improve the experience of the taster sessions / comedy sessions / showcase?</p> <p>Universal Comedy are creating a peer support ‘comedy graduate’ and advocacy programme which aims to encourage course participants to be more confident in vocalising their opinions on treatment and to get involved more generally in supporting new people joining the courses.</p> <p>Would you be interested in getting involved in something like this? What are your thoughts?</p>	5 mins
Projective technique	<p>Well it has been great to hear all about your experiences but I’d like to talk a bit more generally now.</p> <p>I’d like you to think of a person, just a made up person who heard about the Comedy course and thought it could be something for them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think might make this person decide to come along to one of the Comedy course sessions? • What do you think put this person off coming to a Comedy course session? 	10 mins

End	Any other issues you would like to discuss?	Thank you and close.	5 mins
-----	---	----------------------	--------

APPENDIX 5: Participant Focus Group Consent Form



Evaluation of Universal Comedy Consent form

Please tick the boxes below to show that you agree with the following statements:

I confirm that the nature of this focus group has been explained to me.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I agree that MHF can audio record this focus group to be used for the purpose of analysis only and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (explained below).

I understand that any information collected during this focus group will be treated as confidential used in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and the Directive on Privacy and electronic communications Regulations (December 2003). I understand MHF will store personal information relating to this focus group securely for a maximum of one year following the conclusion of the research, after which it will be securely destroyed.

I agree to participate in a focus group for the above evaluation.

Name

Date

Signature