



Ruthless Research

Final report:

Evaluation of the ArtFelt project

September 2019

Submitted by:
Ruth Stevenson

www.ruthlessresearch.co.uk

Contents

Background	4
Methodology.....	5
Delivering the ArtFelt project	6
ARTFELT OUTCOMES:.....	8
Artists will develop their skills in leading intergenerational work.....	8
Project partners increase their understanding of what constitutes high quality arts intergenerational practice	10
Project partners will improve their understanding of the wider impact of intergenerational arts projects beyond the direct participants	12
Care and early years professionals will gain confidence in arts delivery within these settings	13
The care home and nursery relationship will strengthen through participation in this project	14
All project partners learn how to maximise the potential of artist led projects in this context	15
The project partners will learn what effective training looks like in this context	17
Summary and conclusions	18

About Ruthless Research

Ruthless Research is an Edinburgh-based independent research consultancy, through which Ruth Stevenson provides a range of qualitative and quantitative research solutions to organisations who work for the benefit of the community.

Contact Ruth Stevenson

Phone: 07884 023 781

Email: ruth@ruthlessresearch.co.uk

Website: www.ruthlessresearch.co.uk

Executive summary

Background: Starcatchers and Luminate worked together on ArtFelt, a pilot project exploring the impact of putting artists at the centre of an early years / later years collaboration. Greenhill Forbes nursery and Morlich House care home in Edinburgh were selected to participate in the pilot, which was led by two specialist artists.

Evaluation methodology: The independent evaluation (conducted by Ruthless Research) comprised: session observation forms, telephone depth interviews, a creative reflective session with care home participants, and a web survey completed by nursery parents.

Model of delivery: The project commenced with three sessions led by the early years specialist at the nursery and three sessions led by the specialist in working with older people at the care home. This was followed by six joint sessions held at the care home and a celebratory event.

Key findings: Although the nursery and care home had worked together before the pilot commenced, this particular opportunity differed because it was underpinned by the involvement of two professional artists with relevant specialisms that worked together to provide a high-quality artistic experience for a group of children and care home residents.

A method of delivery was proposed and tested through the pilot, and on the whole this worked well. All stakeholders agreed that something similar could work again as a model for delivery of future projects elsewhere. In particular, the decision to hold a small number of separate sessions followed by a greater number of joint sessions helped the artists to get to know the interests and capabilities of participants along with logistics specific to their working environments. This greatly aided the planning for joint sessions and enabled the artists to come up with ideas that were engaging, challenging and practical for the participants.

The pilot project had positive impacts on participating children, care home residents and nursery / care home staff. It was notable that the use of artist-led arts activities was facilitative of these impacts. In particular, the arts activities worked well as a way of engaging both sets of participants and encouraging them to work together, which gradually built relationships and empathy between groups. Alongside this, the professional artists had high expectations of the participants and encouraged them to engage with challenging tasks. The nursery and care home staff showed early concern about the planned activities but ultimately left the pilot with greater expectations of what those in their care might be capable of and greater confidence in their own ability to lead creative tasks.

Concluding remarks: Although this was a brief and small-scale pilot project, it has made a positive difference to those that participated and broadly achieved its aims. It has been a challenging project at times, but this has contributed to the learning.

The learning points identified through careful reflection should provide a useful model to roll out further or upon which others could base their work in the future.

The context for this evaluation

Background

After the award-winning Channel 4 series *Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds* aired in 2017, there has been increased interest in joint activities that bring together care homes and nurseries. This prompted Starcatchers and Luminate to work together on ArtFelt: a pilot project that explores the impact of putting artists at the centre of an early years / later years collaboration.

Starcatchers is Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation. They specialise in arts and creative experiences for babies, toddlers and young children aged 0-5 and the adults who care for them. Starcatchers makes beautiful live theatre, dance and music performances, and arts installations; delivers engagement projects across Scotland placing artists directly into communities; and provides professional development for artists and early years practitioners to develop practice using arts and creativity with very young children.

Luminate is Scotland's creative ageing organisation. Their vision is that all older people in Scotland are able to access high quality arts and creative activities whatever their background and circumstances and wherever they live. Luminate delivers a year-round programme of events and activities which celebrate creativity as we age and reflects and values older people as audiences, participants and artists. Luminate is increasingly seen as the 'go to' organisation and partner for creative ageing work in Scotland, and they collaborate with a growing range of partners across Scotland and beyond. Collaboration has always been at the heart of Luminate's work. They are committed to an approach that builds on local, regional and national partnerships, and believe that any creative initiative benefits from the input of a wide range of views, knowledge and skills.

The collaboration between Starcatchers and Luminate came about through a joint vision to see what happens when you add artists into an existing relationship between a nursery and a care home. What impact can an artist have on the care home, the nursery and the artists? Can we develop training that is suitable for both professionals who are working with older people and those working in early years?

With Luminate being Scotland's creative ageing organisation and Starcatchers being the leading arts early years organisation in Scotland, it made sense to work together. The intention from both Luminate and Starcatchers was to develop the pilot project with the plan being to evaluate and share how this new way of working worked, so that learning could be shared with the arts, care and nursery sectors.

The aims and intended outcomes of the ArtFelt pilot project were as follows:

Project aim	Project outcome
To explore high quality intergenerational arts practice with a care home and a nursery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Project partners increase their understanding of what constitutes high quality arts intergenerational practice▪ Artists will develop their skills in leading intergenerational work▪ The care home and nursery relationship will strengthen through participation in this project
To explore the impact of an artist led project on intergenerational partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ All project partners learn how to maximise the potential of artist led projects in this context▪ Project partners will improve their understanding of the wider impact of intergenerational arts projects beyond the direct participants
To develop intergenerational arts training for care home and early years professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Care and early years professionals will gain confidence in arts delivery within these settings▪ The project partners will learn what effective training looks like in this context

The ArtFelt project took place between September and December 2018 at a nursery (Greenhill Forbes) and a care home (Morlich House) in Morningside, Edinburgh.

Methodology

Independent researcher Ruth Stevenson of Ruthless Research was commissioned to evaluate the ArtFelt project. The methodology for the evaluation comprised collecting and/or collating data from the following sources:

- Session observation forms completed by project leads at nursery and care home, and both artists;
- Telephone depth interviews with project leads at the nursery and care home, and the artists;
- Creative reflective session with care home participants;
- Brief web survey completed by four nursery parents;
- Reflections six months after the Pilot;
- Internal project plans and documentation.

All of the data from the various components of the evaluation was collated and analysed, and the findings are provided in the following report.

Image credit: Hollie McIntosh

Delivering the ArtFelt project

I thought it worked really really well and what we achieved we were delighted with.

The following section describes the delivery of the ArtFelt project in Edinburgh.

Delivery model used

The following structure was proposed for the ArtFelt project, and subsequently delivered:

- A training session will be designed and delivered for nursery and care home staff together.
- A dementia awareness training session will be offered to nursery and care home staff.
- Each artist will deliver 3 x ½ day sessions with the nursery and care home respectively.
- They will then co-design and co-lead 6 x ½ day sessions in the care home with both groups together.
- The project will culminate in a sharing event.

A nursery (Greenhill Forbes) and a care home (Morlich House) in Morningside, Edinburgh were selected to participate in the pilot which took place between September and December 2018. Two lead artists were employed, one of whom had expertise working with early years and one of whom had expertise working with older people.

During the initial sessions, the early years specialist artist worked in the nursery and the artist with specialism in working with older people worked in the care home, focusing on getting to know the participants.

The six joint sessions were all themed around the garden, and comprised:

- Session 1: Sewing material flowers
- Session 2: Making 2D & 3D felt Autumn leaves
- Session 3: Bird bingo, singing and recording bird nursery rhymes
- Session 4: Clay bird making and more bird song singing
- Session 5: Interactive fabric garden and 'green pea' boat making
- Session 6: Celebration Garden Party

Response to the ArtFelt project

Overall response to the ArtFelt project was positive across the range of participants and stakeholders who said that it had been “beneficial” and an “excellent idea” that it “worked really well”.

However, there was felt to be a lot of administration involved with setting the ArtFelt project up and both the nursery and the care home said that they needed to put a lot of time into making plans in relation to “paperwork” and “logistics” and “risk assessments”. As this was a Pilot project, much of the administrative burden would be reduced in subsequent iterations of the project.

Other challenges were largely dealt with and learned from within the bounds of project delivery, and these included: artists unfamiliar with one another’s practice, working with an open brief, appropriate set-up of space, and short timescales.

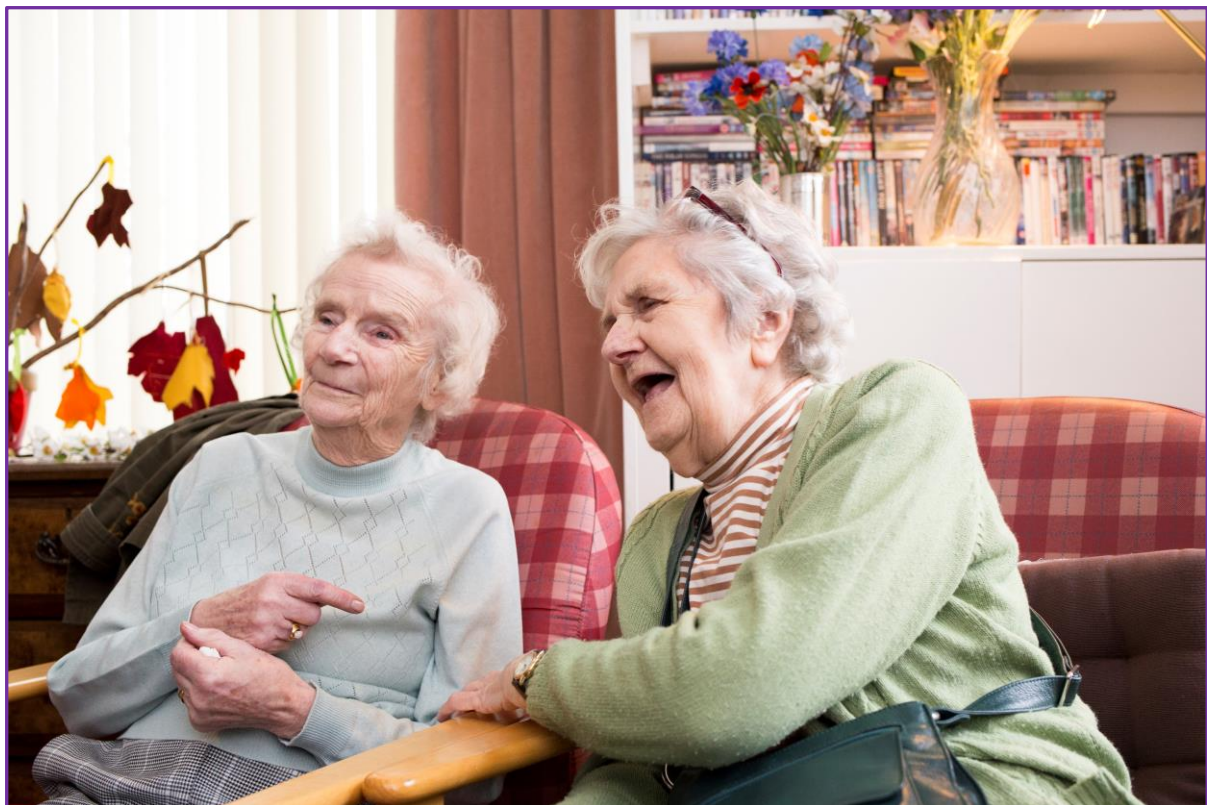
Impact on ArtFelt participants

The positive impacts on the children that participated in ArtFelt included:

- Positive engagement with the art activities;
- Extended concentration on activities;
- Positive recall of events afterwards.

The positive impacts on the care home residents that participated in ArtFelt included:

- Positive engagement with the art activities;
- The opportunity to mix with children;
- The opportunity to be “helpful”;
- Improved mood.



ARTFELT OUTCOME:

Artists will develop their skills in leading intergenerational work

It was very interesting seeing both groups come together and work as one.

The artists learned a lot about leading intergenerational projects during the ArtFelt project.

Learning from the separate sessions

Stage 1 of the ArtFelt pilot involved separate sessions being run in the nursery with the children, and in the care home with the care home residents. The artists felt that this was extremely important so that they could “observe” and “get to know” the individuals they would be working with as well as “easing in” to the project and being “essential in preparation for future sessions”.

Practical learning from the nursery sessions included:

- Work within existing nursery routines.
- Ask the children to wear name tags.
- Use clear and simple instructions, one at a time.
- Many children enjoy movement-based activities.
- Frequent movement breaks are needed.
- The maximum length of time for the children to focus is probably 30 minutes, before they start to become bored.

Practical learning from the care home sessions included:

- Work within existing care home routines.
- Use clear and simple instructions, one at a time.
- A large room is required.
- The set-up should allow easy access for and to the participants.
- Be aware that sessions can become too noisy for some.
- Some of the participants may have limited mobility, limited memory, sight problems, mood fluctuations, or other restrictions.
- Those with limited memory will need frequent reminders about what is happening during sessions, and reminders about what has happened in previous sessions.

Learning from the joint sessions

During Stage 2, the two artists worked together to lead six joint sessions for the children and the care home residents, held at the care home.

The found it to be a professional challenge to lead activities in a way that worked for both the children and the care home residents.



They also found that both children and care home residents could behave in an unpredictable manner, and that this was a challenge when leading sessions.

Practical learning from the joint sessions included:

- Set the room up so that children and care home residents are mixed and are sitting with a known support adult.
- Plan activities and use resources that will prompt conversation.
- Both children and care home residents can be unpredictable:
 - Expectations of behaviour (including understanding what is usual or appropriate) should be managed;
 - Enough staff should be in attendance to support all participants.
- Both children and care home residents benefit from undertaking challenging activities.
- Take photos and share them as a reminder of what has happened.

ARTFELT OUTCOME:

Project partners increase their understanding of what constitutes high quality arts intergenerational practice

I feel a project like ArtFelt is an extremely beneficial project for all involved as it promotes positive wellbeing, positive socialising opportunities and upbeat light hearted interactions between generations.

Taking part in the ArtFelt project enabled the care home and nursery staff to observe and appreciate the value of high quality arts intergenerational practice and the difference that this approach could make, as compared to other activities.

Art as a way of building ambition

The professional artists had high expectations of the children and care home residents, and encouraged them to take on new challenges beyond their comfort zone. The sewing activity, in particular, was considered “risky” and “challenging” for both the children and care home residents. Often, the nursery and care home staff were concerned that the activities would be too challenging thinking that “it’d never work!” or “might be too difficult” but in practice “all of the participants rose to the challenge” and “everyone was quite amazed what they produced”. This has encouraged the nursery and care home staff to be more ambitious on behalf of the children and care home residents.

Art as a bonding activity

The process of creating art together provided many opportunities for the children and care home residents to work together, encouraging “teamwork” and “interaction” and “lots of chat”. This worked well in starting initial conversations between the children and care home residents, and over time helping to build strong bonds between the individuals.



Examples of the formation of strong bonds between individuals include:

- “One participant from the nursery was having fun tying the material around their head, another participant from Morlich House really enjoyed this and copied the child. It was a lovely interaction”.
- “Two residents sat with two of the nursery children and spent the majority of the time laughing and giggling and appear to be getting on very well”.
- “They were giving each other high fives and tens”.
- “One lady with dementia, and a little boy who was super super shy, they had a wee language between themselves”.

Art as a way to build empathy between generations

Working together, the children and care home residents grew to “understand” and “empathise” with one another. Both the care home residents and the children observed that they made one another “happy”. Prompted by the activities, the children and care home residents found common ground and over time they began to understand one another’s needs resulting in “helpful interaction” across the generations.

Art as a memory aide

For the care home residents in particular, the process, creation and documentation of artwork was a helpful memory aide. For some, the process reminded the care home residents of times past. Additionally, recordings and photos of the sessions documented the process and acted as a reminder of what had been done. This is particularly beneficial for those with dementia or poor short-term memory, but having artistic outputs to use as a reminder was also appreciated by the nursery.

ARTFELT OUTCOME:

Project partners will improve their understanding of the wider impact of intergenerational arts projects beyond the direct participants

Some weekends when walking nearby the house she would ask if we could go and see the ladies.

The following impacts of the ArtFelt project extended beyond the participants themselves.

Staff development

The care home and nursery staff appreciated working with the professional artists due to the “structure” and “expertise” that the artists brought, as well as the opportunity for “getting ideas and feedback”.

Improved mood in the care home

The care home staff noted “joy and happiness after each session”, saying that the residents would “leave really happy and cheery”.

Enhanced offering for the nursery and care home

The care home and nursery staff appreciated working with the professional artists as this “enhanced” what they could offer to local families.

Impact on local families

The parents of participating children were pleased that their children had taken part in ArtFelt. When surveyed, four parents all agreed that the project made a positive difference to their child, that it was positive that their child got to work with professional artists, that it was positive that their child got to spend time with older people, and that it was positive that Greenhill Forbes nursery offered their child this opportunity.

The parents said that their children spontaneously recalled and talked about the ArtFelt sessions at home and that passing the care home when going about the community sometimes prompted further discussion.

Celebrating with the wider community

At the close of the project, a celebration Garden Party was held at the care home. Participants and their guests came together to enjoy refreshments and see a display of the work they had done together. All stakeholders felt that it was very important and positive to have held an event to celebrate the project as it was “a pat on the back for everybody” and “created a real buzz”. This was an important event because it extended the celebration of the project beyond the participants themselves. It was noted that “our residents and staff really enjoyed it” and “it is really good for the parents to see what the children have been up to”.

ARTFELT OUTCOME:

Care and early years professionals will gain confidence in arts delivery within these settings

There has definitely been an increase in staff confidence and participation with activities in general since the ArtFelt project.

Six months after the close of the ArtFelt Pilot the staff members have demonstrated new confidence in “coming up with” and “leading” creative ideas and interactions. Recent joint projects have included play dough, “making jewellery using large beads and thread” and “drawing self-portraits of each other”. The staff have also shown themselves to be “very good at being encouraging to both the children and the ladies taking part”.



ARTFELT OUTCOME:

The care home and nursery relationship will strengthen through participation in this project

More and more children and families wish to interact with the care home's residents.

Morlich House and Greenhill Forbes Nursery were selected to participate in the pilot project because they had an existing relationship. It was hypothesized that bringing a familiar nursery and care home together with professional artists would enable greater impacts through them being “creative together” and “working with our wider community”.

Six months later and the relationship between the two settings is “as strong as ever”. There has been an increased demand for shared activities between the children and older people, so timetables have been tweaked to “enable a greater number of nursery children the opportunity to come to visit Morlich House and its residents”. The interactions continue to be “comfortable”, “positive” and “very enthusiastic”.

Morlich House and Greenhill Forbes Nursery have also been “discussing being more organised in our approach to the content of our interactions” in order to be better prepared and have the work “embedded into our ethos”, preparing a programme of themes and activities several months in advance, so that they are “better prepared for the interactive sessions”.

ARTFELT OUTCOME:

All project partners learn how to maximise the potential of artist led projects in this context

I think it should be done again. It is a really beneficial project for anybody's wellbeing.

Across the course of the project many learning points were gathered which could be considered in order to expand the model and maximise the potential of future artist-led projects in this context.

Project stage	Learning point
Project set-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Select partners that are based geographically close in location.▪ Consider whether it makes sense to select partners that already have a relationship.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ If not, longer may be required for the initial set-up phase and relationship building.▪ Appoint one artist with expertise in working with early years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appoint one artist with expertise in working with care home residents. ▪ Hold a project set-up meeting between all project staff and partners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share aims and objectives for the project; ▪ Introduce the role of the artist in this project along with anticipated ways of working; ▪ Discuss the practicalities of project set-up; ▪ Discuss any anticipated challenges. ▪ Encourage the artists to meet to discuss practice and working styles at the earliest opportunity. ▪ Allow plenty of time for the nursery and care home to work out logistics, risk assessments and contracts.
Stage 1: Separate sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold a small number of introductory sessions with the early years specialist working with children in the nursery, and the care home specialist working with residents at the care home. ▪ Use the sessions as an opportunity for the artist to get to know the participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personalities and interests; ▪ Capabilities and likely challenges; ▪ Challenges with the setting and set-up. ▪ Be mindful that the project is taking place within their space / home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-participants may wish to use the space too. ▪ Ask about existing procedures and routines that may take place during the sessions. ▪ Consider ways of making early sessions feel familiar, perhaps leading a session jointly with activity staff at the nursery or care home. ▪ Both artists should be in attendance for at least one of the sessions. ▪ Use the information gathered to plan joint sessions, in collaboration between artists. ▪ Consider ways to ease the transition to joint sessions, particularly for the nursery children.
Stage 2: Joint sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bring the nursery children and care home residents together for a longer series of joint sessions. ▪ It probably makes sense to hold the joint sessions at the care home, for ease of access. ▪ Ensure the room selected is large and is set up to allow easy access for and to the care home residents. ▪ Allow plenty of time to set up each week. ▪ Ensure that enough supporting adults are on hand to help out in small groups. ▪ Be clear who is leading each session. ▪ Plan activities that:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage the children and care home residents to work together. ▪ Involve appropriate movement, particularly for the children. ▪ Are challenging for all participants. ▪ Manage participant expectations (on both sides) around behaviour. ▪ Consider whether it would be possible to work towards making a legacy output to keep in the nursery / care home. ▪ Hold refreshment breaks. ▪ Take photographs.
Celebration event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold a celebration event at the end of the project. ▪ Display the work that was made during the project. ▪ Invite the participants and their families. ▪ Provide refreshments. ▪ Be aware that this room could get busy and noisy.

ARTFELT OUTCOME:

The project partners will learn what effective training looks like in this context

A training package was offered to the care home and nursery.

Starcatchers' Creative Skills Manager Heather Armstrong ran a training session with staff from both settings, exploring the importance of creativity and the arts for under 5s. The session explored open-ended, creative approaches to the arts, current research, early years policy and best practice guidance, and what these approaches look and feel like in the real world. There was also interesting discussion about the parallels that exist between best practice working with participants of all ages and the benefits of the arts throughout life. Luminate's Community Engagement Officer Catherine Middleton Findlay offered insight to Luminate's learnings from Creative Ageing projects delivered in care settings and how these correlate to early years approaches.

A training session called *Being Dementia Aware* was also offered in partnership with Age Scotland, which included:

- What is dementia?
- Early signs and symptom of dementia
- Communication with and including someone living with dementia
- What can be done to reduce the risk of developing dementia.

The session was delivered at the nursery, but the care home staff were invited to attend.

Summary and conclusions

At the close of the evaluation, those involved with the ArtFelt pilot project were generally satisfied with the progress and outcomes of the project.

Project aim 1: To explore high quality intergenerational arts practice with a care home and a nursery.

Although the nursery and care home had worked together before the pilot commenced, this particular opportunity differed because it was underpinned by the involvement of two professional artists with relevant specialisms (working with early years and working with older people) that worked together to provide a high-quality artistic experience for a group of children and care home residents.

A method of delivery was proposed and tested through the pilot, and on the whole this worked well. All stakeholders agreed that something similar could work again as a model for delivery of future projects elsewhere. In particular, the decision to hold a small number of separate sessions followed by a greater number of joint sessions helped the artists to get to know the interests and capabilities of participants along with logistics specific to their working environments. This greatly aided the planning for joint sessions and enabled the artists to come up with ideas that were engaging, challenging and practical for the participants.

The pilot was not without its challenges, although these were largely dealt with and learned from within the bounds of project delivery.

Project aim 2: To explore the impact of an artist led project on intergenerational partnerships.

The pilot project had positive impacts on participating children, care home residents and nursery / care home staff.

It was notable that the use of artist-led arts activities was facilitative of these impacts. In particular, the arts activities worked well as a way of engaging both sets of participants and encouraging them to work together, which gradually built relationships and empathy between groups.

The art also acted as an effective memory aide which was enjoyable for the children and care home residents alike, but was also a powerful way of engaging those with dementia.

Alongside this, the professional artists had high expectations of the participants and encouraged them to engage with challenging tasks. This led to a great sense of satisfaction amongst participants who were proud of what they had achieved. The nursery and care home staff showed early concern about the planned activities but ultimately left the pilot with greater expectations of what those in their care might be capable of.

Project aim 3: To develop intergenerational arts training for care home and early years professionals.

A training package was offered to the care home and nursery, including a session run by Starcatchers exploring the importance of creativity and the arts for under 5s, and a session called *Being Dementia Aware*.

All stakeholders proved themselves to be extremely reflective and suggested ways to improve the project process for future delivery. Based on this, a summarised practical learning points relating to intergenerational working have been prepared. Whilst it was excellent to be able to offer the early years and care professionals access to an existing training package, there is still opportunity to develop intergenerational training and an arts and care training package, which is something that Luminare is currently programming.

Concluding remarks

Although this was a brief and small-scale pilot project, it has made a positive difference to those that participated and broadly achieved its aims. ArtFelt has been a challenging project at times, but this has contributed to the learning.

The success of the ArtFelt pilot project and the useful learning points identified through careful reflection should provide a useful model to roll out further or upon which others could base their work in the future.