



Evaluation of the **Arts in Care Project**

Research Scotland

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Acknowledgements



We would like to thank all the care home residents, care home staff, artists and partners who took part in this evaluation. The evaluation would not have been possible without your support.

1. Introduction and context

This report sets out findings from an evaluation of the Arts in Care project. The evaluation was undertaken by Research Scotland in summer and autumn 2022.

The history of the Arts in Care project

The Arts in Care project was developed in 2019 in collaboration between Creative Scotland, Luminate and The Care Inspectorate. The project was funded by The Baring Foundation and the National Lottery, through Creative Scotland.

The Arts in Care project aimed to build on existing work promoting the arts and creative engagement in care homes, to enhance the quality of life and health of people as they get older. For example, in 2016 The Care Inspectorate and Luminate developed the Arts in Care Resource Pack¹ to promote the importance of creativity, by supporting care staff to plan and run creative art sessions and work with professional artists.

Further work in 2018, commissioned by Luminate², found that despite some good work taking place, work needed to be done to raise the profile and quality of arts in care settings, as well as the skills and confidence of social care professionals.

In 2019, Scottish Care and Luminate undertook further work to distil learning gained from an extended artist residency run by Luminate in partnership with Erskine Care Homes – specifically Bandrum Nursing Home, – to explore whether this could inform the development of shorter arts in care projects³. This approach involved artists using induction and full day visits, to allow staff to spend time with the artist in advance and give the artist time to get to know the residents. The pilot project was

¹ <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/arts-in-care/>

² <https://luminatescotland.org/resource/creative-activities-in-scottish-care-settings/>

³ <https://luminatescotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Bandrum-Pilot-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

recognised to have had a positive impact, with staff members learning a lot and expanding their creative practice.

The Arts in Care project was therefore developed to embed high quality arts in care activity across Scotland, building skills, capacity and strength in both the arts and care sectors.

Arts in Care project aims

The Arts in Care project aimed to:

- support learning and capacity building within the care sector and establish a strong base of committed professionals and homes across Scotland
- establish and support a cohort of highly skilled artists who will continue to work across the care sector
- identify a model to support the ongoing development of artists working in the care sector
- strengthen partnership working across different sectors and disciplines
- embed learning within the Care Inspectorate's scrutiny and improvement support processes.

With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in highly pressured care home environments, the project was adapted to focus on providing high quality artistic and creative opportunities for residents, and supporting wellbeing of care home staff through participating and supporting positive activity.

Arts in Care project activities

The project was developed in 2019. Partners initially aimed to deliver the project in two phases:

- Phase 1: Artist development – A development programme for Scottish based artists, developing skills for working in care homes
- Phase 2: Care sector development – A programme of artist led skills development in care homes across Scotland, with artists working within care homes to share skills and build capacity among care staff, management and inspectors.

The first phase of work took place from October to December 2019. Four training sessions were held with artists. Before the sessions, a needs analysis of artists' perceptions of their practice, areas of strength and areas for development was produced to inform the training content.

However, as Phase 2 artists were being recruited in early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic emerged. The project was paused and did not restart until summer 2022. The context in which the project was operating had changed, with visitors only recently allowed into care homes, and visiting protocols such as testing and masks still in place. Care home staff remained under significant pressures due to the pandemic, and associated additional workloads.

As a result, Phase 2 of the project shifted slightly. It was not always possible to focus on building the skills of care home staff, due to workload pressures, and a decision was made to ensure that the project continued through artist delivery of positive experiences for care home residents.

Participating artists and care homes

Eighteen artists participated in Phase One of the project, and 10 in Phase Two. The 10 artists undertaking the work in care homes included:

- four visual artists
- two poets, and one playwright/ poet
- one movement and film artist
- one musician
- one multimedia artist.

Twenty-five care homes took part in Phase Two of the work. The original aim was to involve 30 care homes, but five of the care homes originally involved in the pilot withdrew, due to the pandemic and changed circumstances since their initial involvement.

Evaluation method

This evaluation involved:

- discussions with artists involved in Phase 1 training, in November 2019

- visits to 5 care homes to explore experiences and impact with care home staff and residents (where possible)
- interviews with 5 artists who took part in Phase 2 delivery in care homes, to explore experiences and learning
- interviews with project partners Creative Scotland, Luminate and The Care Inspectorate.

The five participating care homes were independently selected by Research Scotland. They include a geographical spread across Scotland (North, East, West, Central and South), a mix of small, medium and large care homes, a mix of private, local authority and third sector care homes, and a mix of artforms. The artforms used at the care homes included visual arts, poetry, music and movement and film.



2. Artist experiences

Introduction

This chapter explores artist experiences of the Arts in Care project.

This includes exploring the experiences of artists involved in Phase One and Phase Two of the project, including evidence from an early skills and strengths assessment undertaken by the artists and collated by Luminate, feedback from artists gathered after four training sessions in November 2019 and interviews with 5 artists undertaken in September 2022.

Phase 1: Motivations for being involved

Phase One of the project provided training for artists to support their work in care settings. 18 artists were involved in this phase of the work, in autumn and winter 2019.

Artists said that their main motivations for applying for the programme were:

- to deepen their knowledge and skills for working in residential care and with older people
- the opportunity to develop their creative practice alongside artists from other disciplines
- to expand their network
- to build confidence.

Some artists highlighted that paid opportunities to develop their practice are rare and therefore found the funded nature of the programme – which included an artist bursary - particularly valuable. Some mentioned the positive reputation of Luminate as also being a factor in their motivation to get involved, with a few having previously worked for Luminate on other projects.

“To expand my practice and learn about creative practice and community engagement – and to meet like-minded people.” **Artist**

“I have never seen an opportunity like this – it was very relevant to my practice, well-funded.” **Artist**

Artists assessed their own skills and strengths at the outset of the programme. The main areas that artists said that they would like guidance on were:

- **Ageing and dementia** – managing distressed behaviour, delivering to people with mixed abilities and a range of needs, and practical techniques and skills to engage people with support needs, for example limited motor skills.
- **Care home environment** – understanding safeguarding, care home expectations, the time and space available to deliver and how to deliver in a pressured environment.
- **Creative practice** – to develop more confidence leading creative activities with people with a range of needs, how to change in response to group needs, and get more depth of knowledge on practical creative techniques.

Artists felt that they brought strengths to the programme, including an openness to adapting and improvising, a commitment to trying new things and reflecting on personal practice, and strong knowledge within their own field of practice.

Phase 1: Views on training

Feedback on training

Equal Arts devised the training in discussion with partners, and informed by the artists' training needs analysis. Feedback from the training held in November 2019 was positive with all participants stating that the programme had met their expectations. Participants reported that there was a good balance between practical work and more research-informed sessions within the initial training. Participants particularly appreciated the peer-to-peer aspect of the training, the creative nature of the sessions and the knowledge and expertise of the facilitators.

Specifically, participants mentioned that they particularly liked the layers of practical creative work, the talk from Equal Arts about partnerships and evaluation and, learning about the complexity of dementia. They noted that the training had been well-organised, and that the length of the training enabled them build deeper positive relationships with their peers.

“It was joyful, inspiring, very creative, playful.” **Artist**

“I liked that people who had more experience could share that with people who didn’t have any experience or could bring them onto projects.” **Artist**

Participant feedback highlighted that artists felt that the training was particularly good in relation to building skills for working creatively in a care setting and safeguarding.

Artists reported that they valued the refresher training in November 2021, when the project re-started after the pandemic. Artists were positive about the involvement of the Care Inspectorate in the training and particularly appreciated the Care Inspectorate taking part in the training as a participant. Artists stated how much they appreciated people across all different levels of the programme being brought together. They indicated that this enabled them to understand each other’s roles and build collective understanding.

“My whole concept of the Care Inspectorate has been revolutionised.” **Artist**

There was mixed feedback about the peer support within the programme. While artists welcomed the opportunity to build a relationship up with peers, some suggested it may be useful to consider having allotted time within the programme specifically for peer support to ensure that this was prioritised throughout the project.

Impact of training

All artists reported that the training had impacted on their practice and that they had new skills, knowledge and ideas to use going forward. Participants reported that they had increased their skills, developed new knowledge and built confidence. For some, the workshops had deepened their confidence in existing skills; for others, the new skills and knowledge gave them the confidence they needed to go out into care settings. Going forward, artists said that they would be more creative, playful and confident.

Participants reported that they learned some useful, practical tools on how to engage with people who have dementia. Consequently, many reported that they felt better equipped to adapt their practice. Part of this

was from the training, and partly this was from the peer-to-peer learning with artists using different artforms all learning from each other.

“It has inspired my creativity by doing creative things outside my own genre.” **Artist**

“I feel empowered to trust my judgement.” **Artist**

Ideas for strengthening training

Participants suggested potential ways to strengthen future training.

- **Training format** – more time for training to allow for more discussion and relationship development, and improve pacing of the training through more opportunities for movement, for example swapping chairs, breathing exercises and breaks.
- **Training content** – participants suggested providing:
 - opportunities for interaction with older people as part of the programme
 - opportunities to discuss death and bereavement, for example learning and reflecting on what might happen if a participant passes away
 - more detailed discussion about how to manage a group with mixed abilities, including concrete examples
 - a practical toolkit for managing distressed behaviour
 - more opportunities to hear concrete practice examples from the facilitators
 - practical information, for example where to buy particular materials.
- **Networking** – some suggested including more opportunities for knowledge and skills sharing among participants to share creative practices.
- **Travel and accommodation** – some suggested providing travel and accommodation expenses, particularly for participants from more remote areas.

A few suggested that a natural progression from the training would be to do a peer sharing session, to share practice and reflect. During interviews, a few artists reinforced this through highlighting how much they were looking forward to the session bringing peers together again at the end of the programme. It is important to note that the collective element of the programme was impacted by the emergence of the global pandemic, which limited possibilities for group sessions over the life of the project.

Partner views on training

All partners interviewed attended the initial four-day training programme held in late 2019. They all talked about the positive atmosphere during the training and stated that they believed it had provided an excellent foundation for artists to begin their programme of work. They also stated that they felt it had provided a valuable opportunity for artists to expand their networks and learn from peers.

“The feedback was incredibly positive. It was led by two artists so there was a lot of peer learning. Had they gone straight from that to delivery it would have been amazing, but we all know what happened next!”

Partner

Partners felt that the refresher training in November 2021 had addressed the potential nervousness among the artists about starting to work in care homes. They identified that the inclusion of the Care Inspectorate within this training and the information they provided had eased anxieties for the artists and they supported them to think through their approach. Some partners also felt that it had been important to bring the artists back together before starting work in the homes to reflect on their own personal and professional experiences during the pandemic.

“We had the refresher training which talked a lot about what to expect, like that a lot of residents will have deteriorated, and so they were prepared for that and able to adjust their activities.” **Partner**

Partners all recognised the challenging circumstances within which artists are delivering sessions. They identified ongoing support as being essential to successful delivery, with partners highlighting the importance of ensuring that someone is always available for artists to contact if needed. They noted the importance of providing opportunities for supported reflection during the delivery period to allow artists the chance to debrief after a session and talk through any concerns or issues that may have arisen.

“Some of them have called after a session for a debrief or chat, so I feel like we’ve needed to be quite available to provide that support.” **Partner**

Phase 2: Planning and delivering sessions

Planning

The evaluation involved discussions with five artists who delivered sessions in care homes during Phase Two of the project.

Artists were positive about the quality of planning and organisation throughout the project. The project took place over a challenging period with many artists having completed some or all their preparatory visits to care homes shortly before the start of the national lockdown. However, all reported feeling positive about the way the Arts in Care project adapted to these challenges. All five artists reported that they felt that communication across the project had been good, and they had remained informed of changes. They appreciated that refresher training was provided to prepare them to start working in the care homes once restrictions allowed. They also valued the opportunity to re-visit the care homes prior to the sessions which helped them to build relationships and plan their work.

Artists had varying experiences regarding communication with care homes. All the artists interviewed talked about their awareness of the pressure on care homes and being conscious of not wanting to add to an already challenging period. Most artists noted that telephone communication was more effective than email, although some described this form of communication as being 'functional' and focused primarily on things like organising dates for sessions rather than enabling wider discussions of objectives and outcomes. In these situations, artists were understanding but felt that deeper conversations could have supported them to be more responsive and inclusive.

In contrast, one artist reported how the good level of communication with one small rural home, where she had been able to meet the manager during the planning process and throughout delivery, had enabled her to plan her sessions more effectively and respond to the specific needs and interests of the residents.

Delivery

All five artists expressed how much they had enjoyed their sessions and how rewarding they had found the work.

All artists interviewed stated that their main delivery method was to work with groups rather than with individuals. Two artists did some individual work, but this was quite limited – for example for people who were less able or less comfortable coming out of their rooms. Some artists identified that there had been a distinct shift away from one-to-one work since their initial visits in 2020 (pre-pandemic). They felt that socialisation was now a key priority within most homes, resulting in a desire to bring residents together. Artists therefore planned their sessions accordingly by developing activities to be delivered in a group setting.

“I initially wasn’t sure if they would want me to work with a small group, but all the homes wanted me to see as many people as possible.” **Artist**

However, artists highlighted that while they may have been working with groups, they needed to provide intensive individual support to meet residents’ needs. Artists highlighted the challenging nature of group work, and the challenge of facilitating active participation in groups with a wide range of abilities. This was particularly the case for visual artists.

“But when I say group work there’s a lot of one-to-one going on as well. I’d say it’s more ‘round the table’ than group work. When we’re round the table there’s a lot of variation in ability, so it’s been a case of me working my way round a table rather than leading from the front... It can get quite stressful. I can be talking to one person, and I can see another person getting frustrated.” **Artist**

A few artists who have previous experience working in care homes spoke about perceived deteriorations in residents’ abilities. These artists noted how it had been important to facilitate sessions slowly, to adjust expectations and gently nurture participation.

“I had the sense in 2020 that individual working was possible and desirable. In 2022 I don’t think that was possible. I just think that the whole experience of the past two years and ongoing restrictions means that it’s

already a big step just to have anyone coming in to run sessions.” **Artist**

“I think there’s something about the residents, it’s like they’ve been de-socialised. When I’m trying to develop a conversation in a group setting, I feel like I have to be gentle. It feels like just doing the sessions is an achievement in itself.” **Artist**

Flexible delivery and responsive practice

Some artists spoke about the importance of flexible delivery. They noted that there was often no clear start and end to sessions as, for a variety of reasons, residents would join or leave sessions mid-way through. Artists also noted that there was often no consistency in participation across sessions, partly due to the choices and routines of residents and partly because staff wished for all residents to have the opportunity to participate in at least one session.

“Some people might stay for 5-10 minutes; some people might stay for the duration of 1.5 hours. They were free to come and go within limits of carers being available to bring them back and forth.” **Artist**

All artists spoke of how they needed to adjust their expectations and move away from the idea of a final ‘product’ and focus on engagement through the artistic process. This was to respond to residents’ interests and build in flexibility so that residents had choices over how and when to participate.

“...I needed to simplify what I was expecting to do and slow down the pace. I would have loved to have had finished pieces but just getting them involved and coming along was enough... I’d say it’s important not to have too high expectations of what you can deliver. It’s much more process, much less product.” **Artist**

All the artists spoke about the importance of being responsive to residents’ needs and abilities. They highlighted the wide variations in abilities among residents and how they often had to adapt their approach for each home. They further noted that they were not always aware of the abilities of residents in advance, so they often needed to adapt their practice in the moment to respond to needs as they emerged.

“I do some prep work but also a lot of it is reacting to what is happening on the day.” **Artist**

Artists identified the importance of observing behaviours to identify opportunities for connection. They described how their approach was to engage residents ‘in the moment’ when they saw a spark of curiosity. Artists with aural artforms, such as music, poetry and storytelling, spoke about how they would use their artform to deepen connection and enable residents to actively participate in the session. For visual artists, this often meant having a variety of art activities available to enable them to respond to residents’ different needs and interests.

“It’s engaging through curiosity and experimentation in the moment.” **Artist**

Some artists stated that they felt that they would have needed more time to build towards a final group product or goal, partly due to the number of residents with dementia and partly due to the lower levels of socialisation residents have experienced during the pandemic.

Staff support

Artists expressed a high level of awareness of staffing pressures within care homes.

Most of the artists had met with a member of staff prior to starting their sessions and described these meetings as useful and supportive.

When care home staff were able to give time to support the sessions during project delivery, this was appreciated and valued by the artists. Artists highlighted how staff provided them with valuable information that enabled them to plan sessions more effectively, include residents with more limited mobility and comprehension, and ensure residents who expressed interest in the sessions were able to take part. Artists provided examples of how staff support enabled them to communicate more effectively with residents and how staff observations provided important feedback about residents’ engagement and enjoyment. This was particularly important for residents with more advanced dementia whose verbal communication was limited.

“The activity coordinators were wonderful people. They work very hard but gave their time to me. They were very supportive, friendly, communicative.” **Artist**

“Sometimes it would be difficult to see if they were enjoying it, but the carer would notice their engagement, just by saying they were staring at the cello for example or raising their hand slightly.” **Artist**

However, levels of support varied. A few artists said that there had been no staff member present for any of their sessions. While recognising the reasons for this, they expressed concern that this may have negatively impacted on both their ability to respond effectively to residents’ needs and may limit the sustainability of the work.

Phase 2: Ideas for the future

Some of the artists made suggestions for developing sustainability and impact of the programme. While they understood the reasons for amending the programme to not require working alongside care staff, due to the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic, they all suggested that it was important for sustainability to work more holistically with staff as creative colleagues.

“It’s a valuable thing that’s been lost from the project, to work with care home staff as creative colleagues.” **Artist**

“It’s a shame that we’ve lost the holistic part. Sustainability is a big thing for me, so losing the holistic part puts the sustainability of the work into question.” **Artist**

Artists provided suggestions on how to strengthen the programme. These include:

- **Refocus on creative skills development of care home staff**
While artists understood the reasons for the decision to focus on delivery rather than co-creation with care staff, they felt that the shift away from holistic working with staff negatively impacted sustainability.
- **Building relationships and improve communication with care homes**
Artists recognised that this would need to be approached carefully due to the ongoing pressures on care home staff, but they

suggested that better communication with both managers and staff could potentially improve outcomes and enable artists to better meet residents' needs.

- **Increase the number of sessions**

Artists felt that there should be at least 10-12 sessions to enable the artist to build relationships with residents and become familiar figures to residents with dementia. One artist with previous experience working in care homes felt that it was only after the 7th or 8th session that he became a familiar figure at which point he noticed an increase in communication.

Partner views on artist engagement

The three funding and delivery partners stated they believed that the programme has delivered the aim to support artist development. Furthermore, they suggested that the exceptional circumstances within which the artists have delivered their work has further deepened the artists' skills for working within the care sector and responding to crisis.

“In terms of artist development, absolutely it's met those expectations. It's supporting artists to work within this context. In terms of skills and capacity of the care sector, no. But while it might not be bringing joy to the staff, it's having a huge impact on the residents. I feel really quite proud of it.” **Partner**

Partners highlighted the importance of the initial preparatory artist visits to the planning and relationship development stage, noting that this enabled the artist to become familiar with the available spaces within the homes, build relationships with staff and identify priorities.

Partners welcomed the willingness of artists to adapt their practices and respond to changing circumstances. They spoke of the shift away from producing a final product towards a focus on the artistic process, identifying that this would have been a new approach for some artists.

“I think it was about letting go of the plan. About being more process led and not worrying so much about output at the end. A lot of artists trialled a new way of working and the work that's come out of that has been more meaningful and beneficial for residents.” **Partner**

Partners spoke of how this project has encouraged them to further reflect on the complexity of delivering creative programmes within the care sector. They felt that the programme had deepened their understanding of what it means to be process-led and strengthened their understanding of the importance of flexible programme delivery. It has also improved understanding of the demands of work and highlighted the level of training and support artists require when delivering creative activities.

“This project helped us understand what it means to be flexible and process-led and will have changed our practice in the context of the new world we’re living in.”
Partner

“It’s shown me the amount of training that is required for artists. It’s hit home that it’s really difficult work and the amount of support that’s needed for it to be safe and rewarding for them.” **Partner**



3. Care home experiences

Introduction

This chapter explores how care home staff and residents experienced the arts and creative activity during Phase Two of the Arts in Care programme. It is based on individual interviews with five care home staff and one group interview with three staff members. All staff we spoke to were directly involved in delivering the programme. We either spoke to or observed 16 residents, although the depth of discussions with residents varied dependent on communication needs, memory and concentration.

Overall feedback from both care home staff and residents was positive. Staff welcomed the opportunity to introduce residents to new activities and all the residents expressed how much they had enjoyed their sessions, either verbally or through their behaviours and expressions.

Planning and organisation

All care home staff involved in the evaluation welcomed the project. Staff were positive about the involvement of the Care Inspectorate and felt that they had been very proactive about promoting the programme. They reported that the information provided was useful and enabled staff to begin to think about which residents might be best suited to take part in the project at an early stage. They also welcomed the initial online meeting with Luminate, stating that this was useful to gain more understanding of the aims of the project.

Most staff stated that they had no set expectations but instead just welcomed the opportunity to get new ideas for activities. They appreciated that the project provided funded opportunities for new people with specific skills to come into the home and support the delivery of activities. They also felt that the project would help to build their own confidence to work with new art forms.

“I thought it was good to have something to look forward to. The activities had been limited because of Covid so it was good to have someone else to come in. It was a good change.” **Care home staff**

A few staff members expressed initial doubts about the project, and were unsure that the arts activities would be suitable for their residents. Any initial reluctance was however soon overcome after meeting the artist and talking through ideas for delivery.

“When I heard about it, I thought it would be painting or arts and crafts. It turned out it was music and the cello. Initially I wasn’t sure about it. But they absolutely loved it.” **Care home staff**

Delivery

Co-developing activities and building trust

Care home staff appreciated the opportunity to meet the artists before their initial sessions. This enabled them to gain a better understanding of their artforms and to talk through the best way to approach the sessions. They all reported that these meetings were positive and productive, and that they found the artists to be respectful and keen to understand the priorities for their home. Some staff stated that they decided to keep the first session open for the artist to meet the residents before deciding on the activity that they would deliver, and they valued this opportunity to ensure the activities responded to residents’ interests. However, where a more structured approach was used feedback remained positive from both staff and residents.

“She was really patient with the residents. And that first session made the difference. Just going around and talking to people and seeing what they’d like to do.” **Care home staff**

Session structure

All staff members stated that delivery primarily focused on working with small groups of residents. The group sizes tended to be small, usually 4-8 residents per group. Two staff members reported that some individual work had also taken place, although the intention of working individually with residents was often to encourage the resident to participate in a later group session. Where individual sessions had happened, staff felt that this had worked well for residents with less confidence or those with concerns re-engaging in a group due to Covid-19. A few staff members mentioned that they appreciated the regularity of sessions, noting that routine is often important to their residents.

Respectful, inclusive facilitation

All care home staff were positive about the artists' approach to facilitation and engagement with residents. They stated that the artists were flexible in their approach and patient with residents. Staff reported that artists were responsive to residents' needs and appreciated how artists adapted activities to meet the varying abilities and interests within the group. They particularly appreciated the various ways that the artists had taken a creative approach to ensure inclusion, from using apps to promote engagement for people with limited dexterity through to designing group projects that required a range of skill levels to ensure all residents were able to contribute to the final project irrespective of ability.

"She made us feel welcome and comfortable" Care home staff

"The residents were all keen to come through. They were looking forward to it. They came through of their own free will." Care home staff

All residents were also positive about the artists' approaches to facilitation. Residents made comments stating that the artist was kind or patient and that they made them feel welcome. Residents provided examples of artists adapting the sessions to meet residents' interests and experiences, for example by playing favourite songs or finding poems that responded to a story from their lives. They also provided examples of how they had been able to participate in different ways and of how the artist had taken the time to explain the activities and support them to take an active part in the session.

"I liked that she trusted us to make it ourselves. She helped, but she trusted us to do it." Resident

"I liked the atmosphere. Just being together. The lady was very patient. And we had a nice chat!" Resident

"He was a very knowledgeable chap. I fair enjoyed it!" Resident

Ideas for the future

Some staff talked about the intensive support required by residents to enable participation in activities. Staff highlighted the length of time it can take to mobilise residents, suggesting that this should be factored into future planning. They also highlighted the intensive support required for some residents to maintain participation throughout an activity, suggesting that this should also be taken into account when thinking about staff/participant ratios. This is particularly important in homes experiencing staffing shortages with some staff and artists suggesting that more support with facilitation is required to ensure inclusion.

Example: individual needs

The staff member described how each of the three residents who came to the group regularly required intensive support. Eleanor is able but needs one-to-one support as she will wander off if left to her own devices. Sarah has fluctuations in her mood, so she can get angry easily, particularly if frustrated, and Fran is extremely quiet and will fall asleep if she's not kept actively engaged. Alongside this, both Sarah and Fran are at high risk of falling, so they can't be left unattended. The staff member explained that this means that when she is running sessions on her own, she can't leave the room as they can't be left unattended, so just by having the artist there she is able to do more and support residents better.

Staff felt that a longer programme of around 10 sessions would be welcomed, with some staff noting that it took the first couple of sessions to get things right. Care home staff suggested that more sessions would have not only been welcomed by residents but also have potentially allowed staff to gain more confidence to continue delivering the activities after the end of the programme.

All staff expressed a desire to continue the work, however the short delivery time combined with challenges around staffing meant that they were unsure if they were in a position to commit to ongoing delivery. They suggested that this raises questions about sustainability, suggesting that future programmes would benefit from having built-in time to engage with the wider team of care staff.

None of the care home staff had received specific training as part of the programme. Some staff felt that this raised a question about sustainability of the activities, particularly as staff involvement had generally been limited to activity staff. However, all staff interviewed felt

that despite not having formal training, they had gained valuable skills through observing the artist and supporting sessions.

“Staff training would have been good. Staff sessions to get wider staff interested to sustain programme activities.” **Care home staff**

Partner views on care home engagement

Partners were pleased that care homes were committed to continuing the project after the emergence of the pandemic.

“They’ve been responsive in getting this set up in quite a short space of time. Engagement’s not been a problem which says quite a lot given we’re working in 25 homes.” **Partner**

One partner noted that despite initial concerns that the pandemic would lead to a large drop in participating homes, in practice this did not happen. In contrast, they suggested that the pandemic and the suffering many care homes have endured led to a sharpened interest in creative activity across the care sector in recognition of the need to find ways to bring residents together, express themselves, and experience joy.

“I think before the pandemic creative activity was seen as a ‘nice’ thing to do. They are taking it more seriously now.” **Partner**

Some partners noted that some care home managers assumed that the programme would have a visual arts focus. When they became aware of the breadth of arts activities, this was met with some reticence with some managers who believed that residents would be unlikely to engage with artforms such as poetry or performance. However, despite this reticence partners reported a keen interest in the programme from care homes and felt that this was due to successful messaging and that this was a fully funded programme.

Partners felt that while the pandemic has meant that they have not been able to meet the aim of developing the creative capacity of care sector staff, this shift was both necessary and appropriate in the circumstances. While they acknowledged that working with residential care staff was crucial to embedding a culture of creativity within the care sector, they all agreed that reframing away from staff development and towards using

creativity to enhance staff wellbeing was an appropriate response to the current staffing pressures within residential care.

“We accepted that we would have to relax that ambition given the staffing crisis in the care sector. It was becoming more difficult for staff to dedicate that time, so we decided to consider staff learning opportunities where possible but rather than framing it as staff development it was more of a care and healing opportunity for staff. It was an opportunity to do something good for them as well as the residents.”

Partner



4. Impact

Introduction

This chapter explores the impact of the activities on residents, care homes and artists. It is based on discussions with care home staff, care home residents and artists involved in the programme.

Impact on residents

Resident views

Some residents were able to communicate how they felt about the sessions, and the difference it made to them.

Most residents spoke of how much they had enjoyed their sessions. Two residents, who were not able to verbally communicate, were seen by a researcher to be cradling and playing with the clay dolls they had made during their sessions. One resident named her doll and was peacefully cradling it in her arms, and the other resident, was playing with her doll and laughing.

Residents commented that they enjoyed the activities and looked forward to the sessions. They appreciated the skills and knowledge of the artists and valued that they took the time to listen to them. Some residents spoke of how they remembered taking part in sessions and how it stimulated conversation or memories. Some residents clearly displayed a sense of pride at what they had been able to achieve, and others talked with pleasure about taking part in the activities.



“I made a tiny wee mug! I liked that it was something I’d made.” **Care home resident**

“I sang along.” **Care home resident**

“She played my mums favourite song, and I was crying.” **Care home resident**

“I liked to listen and that would spark off a memory.” **Care home resident**

“It’s soothing to hear poetry, so even if you don’t know the area the poem is about, it’s still soothing.” **Care home resident**



Care home staff views

All care home staff involved in the evaluation were able to provide examples of how the programme had impacted positively on residents. This ranged from simply providing residents with something to do, through to powerful examples of changes in behaviour. For example, some care home staff reported that residents had left their rooms to join in a group activity for the first time, or felt that residents with more challenging behaviours had become calmer and less aggressive.

Positive impacts for residents identified by staff include:

- Giving residents something to do
- Giving resident something to look forward to
- Providing an opportunity to do something new
- Providing residents with something to talk to their families about
- Residents becoming calmer both during and after the session
- Residents becoming less aggressive and disruptive
- Residents spending more time interacting and socialising with other residents
- Residents displaying a sense of pride in their achievements
- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Increased physical skills, including dexterity, strength, balance, and movement.

“It’s been fantastic. The residents have remembered it and it’s given them something to do.” **Care home staff**

“Residents made new connections with other residents.” **Care home staff**

“Their faces just lit up. They kept singing afterwards. You could see how much it brightened them up. It definitely heightened their mood.” **Care home staff**

Example

One care home staff member described seeing behaviours in the residents that she had never seen before during the first session. She recalled how one resident rarely talks and when she does, she is always extremely quietly spoken, almost in a whisper. But when she was talking about her favourite things she spoke in a conversational way with the artist.

“I’ve never seen her talk like that with anyone other than her own family.”

Artist views

All the artists involved in the evaluation provided observations of positive impacts for residents. They all described moments of laughter and emotional connection, and of feeling like sessions had a relaxed atmosphere.

“There was lots of laughter! We had lots of fun.” **Artist**

Some artists spoke of the particular impact on residents with more advanced dementia. They provided examples of staff witnessing new or rare behaviours in residents, and of residents becoming calmer or more willing to interact with each other.

“There were some residents where it would change their character entirely. I’d been warned that one lady was loud and grumpy. When she arrived, she was complaining loudly about being cold and asking why she’d been brought there. But as soon as the music started, she started singing. She was using the instruments and initially she was just playing randomly

to the music but then when I started playing one song she started listening attentively and sensitively playing along to the music. She was really attentively listening. She was singing, smiling, laughing.” **Artist**

“The staff in one home told me that one person was peaceful for the rest of the day and that they are normally quite agitated.” **Artist**

Some artists felt that by encouraging residents to use their other senses, they were potentially able to communicate in new ways and build moments of connection.

“Given the wide spread of people it may be harder work for me to include people with more advanced dementia, but it’s more rewarding. There’s that extra layer of communication even if they can’t speak. They can tap on a drum, and I can tap back, and we can have a conversation.” **Artist**

Some artists reported that residents left their rooms and chose to join a group activity for the first time. In a few cases this led to residents taking part in other activities.

“One lady wasn’t leaving her room, but she then came down to join the group session the following week, including having her lunch downstairs with the others.” **Artist**

Impact on care home staff

All of the care home staff involved in the evaluation reported feeling that they had benefited from the project.

Some stated that while they had initially felt slightly apprehensive about the prospect of working with an artist, they now felt more confident in delivering creative activities. This was partly due to simply feeling more confident with the specific artform and partly due to being motivated to try creative activities after observing the positive impact of the sessions on residents.

“I’d be more inclined to try some more art now. To try anything crafty just to bring a group together.” **Care home staff**

“I learned an awful lot.” **Care home staff**

Some care home staff also spoke about their increased sense of achievement from seeing changes in residents’ behaviours or from witnessing moments where residents became more articulate or communicative.

Some care home staff also felt that simply working alongside someone else made their work easier, noting the intensive nature of supporting group work with residents with limited mobility or who require constant observation. The opportunity to work with an artist was particularly welcomed by staff who deliver activity sessions alone. Some staff also highlighted the impact of ongoing restrictions on their workload, noting that they now have less time for planning activities. The project therefore supported them to continue to offer a range of activities for residents.

“It gave residents a new activity, a new face and they enjoyed it. It filled our planner with something different. I have to do all the testing for visitors now, so planning activities gets less time at the moment.” **Care home staff**

More widely, care home staff gave examples of how the activities had impacted positively on the general atmosphere within the home. Staff described the atmosphere during sessions as calm and relaxed. A few felt that the work was stimulating interest and starting a conversation about the potential of creative activities and increasing visibility of this type of work.

“It creates an environment of calm.” **Care home staff**

Some care home staff spoke of how the sessions had ‘slowed things down’, noting that the routine in residential care can often be very busy. They suggested that this break in routine was positive for both residents and staff.

“It gave them a chance to slow down and enjoy the quiet, breaking out of their routine, structure and

busyness. It has been good for residents and staff.”

Care home staff

Some care home staff felt that the sessions helped with their engagement with families, providing the opportunity for staff to take photos and videos of the residents engaged in different activities, and share these with others. They felt that this provided a positive communication with residents’ families, highlighting that this is particularly important for homes located in more rural areas where families might not be able to visit regularly.

Artists suggested that through involvement in the sessions, care home staff got to see residents in a new and more nuanced way. This included gaining a better understanding of their interests and capabilities, developing a better insight into their lives before entering the home. A few artists also felt that the creative nature of the sessions had gently challenged staff to adjust their expectations of some residents’ capabilities.

“I think they’ve seen the residents enjoying themselves in a more creative way. Just having a laugh, getting to know each other better. And producing stuff that they might not have expected them to be able to.” **Artist**

Impact on artists

At the time of this evaluation, most of the artists were still delivering sessions. Most felt that they were still in the process of reflection about impact on their practice. However, some of the ways they identified that the work had impacted their practice were:

- Increased understanding of how to work flexibly
- Increased confidence to focus on the creative process rather than final ‘product’
- More confidence to work within the care sector
- More confidence to work with people with dementia
- Increased awareness of the emotionally and psychologically demanding nature of the work
- Increased skills to engage creatively when there is a variation in abilities
- Development of new practices and resources
- Encouraged artists to continue working with older people

- Increased abilities to articulate the potential impact of their artistic form
- Increased potential for paid work opportunities.

“One of the things I’m taking away is how to work with objects. It’s thinking about them more as theatre. It’s taking them in, revealing them and having a sequence that goes with it. Trying to structure it in a more deliberate way.” **Artist**



5. Conclusions

Delivery of the Arts in Care project

The Arts in Care project was developed in 2019 and initially aimed to:

- support learning and capacity building within the care sector and establish a strong base of committed professionals and homes across Scotland
- establish and support a cohort of highly skilled artists who will continue to work across the care sector.

The project achieved its aim of establishing and supporting a cohort of skilled artists, and artists indicate they are keen to continue to work across the care sector.

With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in highly pressured care home environments, the project was adapted to focus on providing high quality artistic and creative opportunities for residents, and supporting wellbeing of care home staff through participating and supporting positive activity – rather than a formal focus on learning and capacity building.

The project was able to progress in 2022 in the context of ongoing Covid-19 related restrictions in care home environments. Almost all of the care homes (25 out of 30) elected to stay involved in the programme, and most artists were also retained.

Artist experiences: Phase 1

Artists were positive about the opportunities to develop their practice through the Arts in Care project. Artists sought to develop skills around working with older people, people with a range of needs and creative practice in a care home environment. Artists felt that the training they received helped to build their skills for working creatively in a care setting, and safeguarding the people they work with.

Artists felt that the training impacted positively on their practice, and they had new skills, knowledge and ideas to use in the future.

Some would have liked more opportunity for peer networking and connection – which was affected by the emergence of the pandemic.

Artist experiences: Phase 2

Artists were pleased with how the Arts in Care project was adapted to meet changing needs during the pandemic, and felt that refresher training provided before the project re-started helped them to feel confident about their approach. Artists learned that:

- there was demand for group work to offer social opportunities post Covid-19
- delivery needed to be flexible to meet the needs of a range of residents
- there was a need to focus on the process of artistic creativity rather than a finished output or product
- plans needed to be simplified, slowed down and follow resident interests in the moment
- care home staff were very valuable in supporting the planning and delivery of sessions, including communicating with residents.

Care home experiences

Care home staff welcomed the Arts in Care project and felt positive about the involvement of the Care Inspectorate. Staff welcomed the opportunity to get new ideas for activities and appreciated the involvement of artists with specific skills to support activities for residents.

Care home staff appreciated the opportunity to meet the artist before the first session. A few had initial doubts about whether activities would suit their residents, but these were soon overcome after meeting the artist. Staff were positive about the artists' approach to facilitation and engagement with residents, emphasising their patience and how they adapted activities to meet the varying abilities and interests within the group and ensure that all could be included.

Residents enjoyed the sessions, and were pleased that artists could explore their interests and experiences, for example by playing their favourite songs or finding poems that related to their lives.

Care home staff indicated that residents needed intensive support to participate in this type of activity, and that a longer programme of sessions would be welcomed. This would allow more time to develop a format that worked and build on this, and for care home staff to develop their own skills to continue delivering similar activities after the end of the programme. Staff would have welcomed some training so that they could sustain activities over the longer term.

Impact

Residents enjoyed the sessions and looked forward to them. They valued the way the artists engaged with them, and found that it stimulated conversation or memories, and built a sense of pride. Many of the residents had very significant communication and other needs, and were not able to talk about their involvement in detail. Artists agreed that residents had fun and connected emotionally with the activities and others in the room.

Care home staff felt that the Arts in Care project had an impact on residents by giving them new things to do, look forward to and talk to their families about. Staff also felt that some residents became calmer, spent more time interacting with other residents, had a sense of pride in their achievements, increased their confidence and self-esteem and improved their physical skills including dexterity, strength, balance and movement. Care home staff also indicated that the sessions helped to build a calm and relaxed atmosphere within the home.

Learning

The Arts in Care project was made possible through:

- a shared vision and commitment across the partners
- flexibility during the Covid-19 pandemic
- positive but focused engagement with care homes
- a focus on process rather than products or outputs
- person centred and needs based delivery
- knowledgeable, skilled and confident artists
- training and support for artists.

While the pandemic meant that the aim of building creative capacity within the care sector had to be relaxed during the Arts in Care project, this remains an important area of work for the future and is crucial to

embedding a culture of creativity. There is an appetite from care home staff for this capacity building, although ongoing staffing and time pressures may continue to make this challenging.

The pandemic also impacted on peer learning and networking opportunities between artists, which artists were keen to see embedded in any future work in this area.

Partners all expressed hope that the Arts in Care programme be a key step towards embedding creativity in the care sector. They emphasised that the learning from this programme would enable them to be in a better position to understand how best to support both artists and the care sector.

The Arts in Care project highlights what is possible, and how the approach could be developed in the future. Suggestions include re-focusing on training for care home staff, re-introducing more peer learning for artists and allowing for more artist time in care homes.

