



Why do this research?

Dementia is a global public health priority with no cure and limited medical treatments. The last 10 years have seen a change in policy rhetoric towards the condition, such as the Welsh Government's national policy vision for 'living as well as possible' with dementia. To realise this vision, global and national policies call for improving the public understanding of dementia. Policies also acknowledge the importance of non-pharmacological approaches for dementia care, including arts interventions for improving outcomes such as quality of life. However the field is still in its infancy and the evidence base has required development.

Aims

Dementia and Imagination examined how arts activities:

- Are beneficial to people living with dementia and those who care for them.
- Help us understand the experience of living with dementia.
- Help raise public awareness of living with dementia and improve dementia knowledge.

What did we do?

We developed a 12-week visual art programme (viewing and making) and examined the impact on people living with dementia and their carers through a mixed-methods longitudinal investigation. We collected quantitative, qualitative and observational data at 3 time points to capture the impact 'in the moment' and 'over time'.

We delivered a range of events at festivals and other spaces to engage the public, and training activities to support skills development for people using the arts in dementia care.

<p>Who took part? 115 people living with mild to severe dementia and 146 family and professional carers in either the community, care homes or hospital day centres in England and Wales took part in the evaluation.</p> <p>100s of people attending festivals (e.g. 800 at the Green Man Festival 2015) and over 100 artists and care professionals benefitted from the wider activities.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Imagining Dementia Friendly Futures <i>What would we like the future to look like? What are your dreams? What do you believe in? What would you like to change?</i></p> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Drawing by a person living with dementia: imagining herself as a ballerina.</i></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div>
--	---

Outcomes

- Taking part in a visual arts activity was better for well-being than just taking part in a social activity, highlighting the unique contribution of the arts.
- Quality of life scores were significantly higher at the end of the programme compared to the start.
- The programme was a stimulating experience, enabling personal resilience and social connectedness.
- Participants reported the programme as being interesting, friendly, and enjoyable. They reported a high sense of achievement and felt involved in the session.
- The benefits were evident regardless of the setting or stage of dementia.
- For every £1 invested in the arts activities, £5.18 of social value was generated.
- For the carers, the art programme made visible the capabilities of the person living with dementia, enabling them to see the person behind the condition.

- The art programme inspired the professional development of care home staff.

“The group sucks you out of the abyss, lifted me out of depression”

Examples of wider impact

- The D&I research informed a practitioners’ handbook which has received 10,318 downloads (data up to September 2019). In partnership with Denbighshire County Council Arts Service, Equal Arts (Newcastle), Engage Cymru and Nottingham Contemporary, we delivered training using the practitioners’ handbook at a number of events to over 200 artists and other health practitioners in England and Wales. Evaluations of the sessions indicate improved skills, e.g. *“I will introduce objects into my art sessions with older adults and allow more time for participants to reflect and create”*.
- The practitioners guide and research from Dementia and Imagination were selected to be part of the new *‘Social care Wales resources for dementia professionals’*. Since launching (25 10 2018) the website has had 6,877 unique views and 9,099 total views. This is equivalent to 43% of the target audience of domiciliary care workers (16,000). It has the no. 1 Google ranking for the term ‘Dementia resource Wales’.
- Building on the public engagement activities in Dementia and Imagination, we developed a ‘dementia supportive practice community’. This is now an established network for people living with dementia, service providers, university research staff, carers, health and social care staff and spreads across North and mid Wales (current membership is 384 people). This has led to members becoming advocates, representing people living with dementia on international platforms, and becoming an established group of ‘dementia educators’ working alongside research and teaching staff and students at Bangor University.

Funding and partners

D&I was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of the Connected Communities programme (2013-2017). This was a large arts and science collaboration and the delivery involved: Bangor University (led by DSDC Wales Research Centre, School of Health Sciences); Newcastle University; Swansea University; Manchester Metropolitan University; University of West London; Age Watch; Denbigh Council Community Arts, Equal Arts (Newcastle), Nottingham Contemporary.

Evidence (our publications)

- Jones, C., Windle, G., & Edwards, R. T. (2018). Dementia and Imagination: A Social Return on Investment Analysis Framework for Art Activities for People Living With Dementia. *The Gerontologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gny147> (epub ahead of print)
- Parkinson, C., Windle, G., Taylor, K. (2017). *Research informed approaches to visual arts programmes*. Available online at: <http://www.artsforhealth.org/resources/dementia-and-imagination.pdf>
- Windle, G., Joling, K., Howson-Griffiths, T., Woods, B., Jones, C. H., van de Ven, P., Newman, A., Parkinson, C. (2017). The impact of a visual arts programme on quality of life, communication and well-being of people living with dementia: A mixed-methods longitudinal investigation. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 1-15.
- Windle G, Gregory S, Howson-Griffiths T, Newman A, O'Brien D, Goulding A. Exploring the theoretical foundations of visual art programmes for people living with dementia. (2018). *Dementia (London)*, 17, 702-727.
- Windle, G., Caullfield, M., Woods, B., & Joling, K. (In press). How can the arts influence the attitudes of dementia carergivers? *The Gerontologist*.
- For more outputs see <http://dementiaandimagination.org.uk/>

Contact for details: Prof. Gill Windle, DSDC Wales, Bangor University. g.windle@bangor.ac.uk