

CASE STUDY

Creative Care Homes in Denbighshire

Music, dance and arts and crafts workshops were delivered by professional practitioners in Denbighshire care homes, upskilling frontline care staff and improving wellbeing of residents through creative participation and interaction with school pupils.

Summary

Creative Care Homes in Denbighshire was a Comic Relief-funded project that ran between May 2018 – December 2019. The project was designed to upskill care staff, improve the wellbeing (both mental and physical) of care home residents and help care homes integrate more with their local communities and schools.

Following training sessions for care staff, skilled practitioners spent 18 months attending the care homes twice monthly to deliver targeted music, dance/movement and visual art sessions.

Outcomes were overwhelmingly positive, with care homes reporting a positive effect on residents.

“The residents that join in the activities seem to be in better moods and feel better all-round physically and mentally; it's something they look forward to doing”

Staff Member

The direct project cost was £13710, which amounts to approximately £6.50 per person per session, over the eighteen months of the project.

Case Study

The aims of this participatory creative project was to:

- Reduce isolation amongst residents and enhance wellbeing and mental health;
- Upskill staff and increase their confidence in using creative tools;
- Increase mobility for some residents;
- Integration of care home residents with children from local schools and also with wider community.

Methodology

Evaluation methods for this case study included:

- Quantitative data collated via regular Survey Monkey questionnaires completed by all frontline care staff
- Observation of creative sessions
- Feedback sessions with residents, staff and practitioners
- Artists' diaries
- Interviews on film

The project was also independently evaluated by Milestone Tweed, who carried out qualitative interviews with staff and residents in line with the ORID method. Follow link to: “Music, Dance and Arts and Craft in Care Homes in Denbighshire”, Abigail Tweed 2020.

Funders

The project was funded by Comic Relief's Care Home Challenge 2 Fund which aims to improve the wellbeing of care home residents and research the benefits of intervention.

Outputs

The project was led by Denbighshire County Council Arts Service, working in partnership with NEW Dance and Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias Music Centre. The sessions took place at three local authority care homes in Denbigh, Corwen and Ruthin (the Ruthin home was decommissioned during the life of the project).

The project consisted of 144 artist-led sessions held twice-monthly over a period of 18 months between May 2018 – December 2019. Sessions engaged care home residents in activities designed to improve their health and wellbeing, as well as upskilling staff to deliver outside the sessions. Activities included printmaking with Tara Dean, craft with Ticky Lowe, singing with Arfon Wyn and movement/dance with Hanna Roberts.

Outcomes

There were three main themes which emerged from the data: the impact of the activities on the residents, the impact of the project on the staff and the success of the types of interventions.

Impact on residents

Residents, staff, managers and the artists all spoke clearly about the happiness and enjoyment that emerged as a result of the creative work. ***“They enjoy it. It breaks the day up and is something different for them. It gives them contact with the outside world.”***

There was evidence from staff of reduced isolation amongst residents and enhanced wellbeing and mental health. ***“They respond to the activity, smile, laugh, talk to each other, a much brighter attitude.”***

Some staff members felt that there could be a reduction in residents falling as a result of their increased mobility and the regular exercises they were doing both with the dance specialist and with staff.

“Improves their movement and flexibility, strengthening social circles.”

Impact on staff

Some of the staff changed the way they worked with the residents as a result of the project. These staff felt that their confidence to be creative had increased, for example in supporting residents to do exercises in their chairs.



“It was good for the staff to see the work of the artists. Certain staff had an interest in keeping it going and were surprised at the reaction from residents. It pushed the boundaries of what certain staff are expecting from the residents.”

“As a carer I have learnt and seen how it affects the residents’ wellbeing and will continue it in my role.”

Interventions

The engagement between the children and residents was reported as highly impactful for both children and residents.



“One man who never joined in has a smile on his face when he’s with the little kids. The interaction with the little kids was important with the residents as they get them going. They don’t see small children very often . . . the residents interaction was unbelievable with the children. The kids enjoyed it.” Staff member

The quality and the variation of art forms was noted as a strength as was the ability of the artists to speak Welsh to the Welsh speaking residents

Evaluation

There are a multitude of studies which have gathered evidence suggesting that arts programmes can improve health and wellbeing. There are also more specific studies looking at the effects of arts interventions with elderly people. One literature review (*The Value of the use of participatory arts activities in residential care settings to enhance the well-being and quality of life of older people: A rapid review of the literature* Andrew Fraser, Hilary Bungay and Carol Munn-Giddings 2014) examining participatory arts activities in residential care settings noted:

“There is some suggestion that in the short term participating in arts activities improves mood, engagement and memory. There is some evidence that participating in arts-based activities has a role to play in improving the quality of life of older people living in residential care settings.”

The findings from this project in Denbighshire care homes are similar to the study mentioned above. There were noted improvements for residents in their mood, their engagement with both staff and other residents and the stimulation of residents’ long term memory.

Key Findings

Questionnaires completed by participating care staff show the following:

- Most care staff felt that activity was either valuable or very valuable for the majority of residents.
- Most care staff noted that around 75% of residents regularly participate in activity;
- 97% of staff felt that the majority of residents seemed in a *much better* or *better* mood during the dance or music activity.
- When asked what benefits residents gained from engaging with school children and members of the community, almost 90% of staff saw improved interaction and communication with others, while over 65% cited improved mental health and a feeling of belonging. Other benefits included feeling valued and stronger friendships.

“The residents that join in the activities seem to be in better moods and feel better all-round physically and mentally; it's something they look forward to doing”

“Music cheers residents up and dance good for mobility and exercise”

“Residents’ mood improves after singing and dancing. They seem a lot happier”



There were many reports of residents and staff having had a positive experience in this project and not wanting the project to end. One key indicator of the success and value of the project for the residents is the fact that one of the care homes will be continuing the monthly movement activity funded by money raised from their raffle.