

Case studies: How can the arts and creativity support people who are shielding or vulnerable during Covid-19?

Project: Lost in art

Organisation: Denbighshire Leisure Ltd's Community Arts Programme

Region: North Wales

'Lost in Art has gone over and above everyone else and deserves a medal.'

Introduction

Lost in art is a visual arts project aimed at people living with dementia, along with their family carers. The aim of the project is to explore the role of the visual arts in addressing issues which can affect people with dementia, including social isolation, confidence, communication, lack of independence and quality of life and wellbeing. The project was developed with the support of the Dementia Services Development Centre at Bangor University. In response to the pandemic and its restrictions on face to face contact we are now delivering a remote Lost in Art service. Art Boxes for home delivery, electronic instruction sheets, short tutorial films, phone calls and What's App groups for keeping in touch and peer support and signposting to additional support when needed.



The Remote Lost in Art principles have been used to develop tailor-made packs for our other services users as well during the lock down, including our work with care homes residents, with the frail elderly who are shielding, Stroke survivors, adults with learning disabilities, those living with terminal illnesses such as motor neuron disease and those living with mental health problems.

Funders

Arts Council of Wales and Denbighshire County Council

Who is it for?

Lost in art is a visual arts project aimed at people living with dementia, along with their family members and carers. However, we have used the same principals as the Lost in Art project and have also developed art packs to do at home for other service users including the frail elderly who are shielding, adults with complex learning needs, care home residents, service users who are living with long term health conditions and accessing support from the local hospice and Stroke survivors. We are currently developing packs for those

who are living with long term complex mental health conditions through Tŷ Môr mental health centre in Rhyl and the Vale of Clwyd MIND support groups across the county.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

The aim of the project is to explore the role of the visual arts in addressing issues which can affect people living with dementia and other mental health conditions, including social isolation, confidence, communication, lack of independence and quality of life and wellbeing. We were also aware of the added pressure the lock down and the pandemic has had on our participants and have seen how important the art projects have become in keeping in touch and supporting service users in their homes. The projects have also aimed to combat loneliness for those elderly participants who are shielding and those living with mental health conditions and learning disabilities who have seen their worlds shrink. As the projects are tailor made we have tried to support the physical health as well as the mental health of some of our Stroke Group members for example and our hospice group that are living with long term health conditions such as motor neuron disease.

Where is it happening?

Denbighshire, North Wales. The county is a mix of populated coastal areas in the North and the rural South. The western part of Rhyl is home to the most deprived communities in Wales, according to The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Two wards in the town are the most deprived, based on eight factors including income, health, education and access to green space. However, the rural South of the county also has high levels of deprivation in terms of access to services, which includes travel times to amenities and broadband.

Are you working in partnership?

We work with several partners to deliver our projects. Those living with dementia and their carers are signposted to Lost in Art through social services, Community Navigators, dementia clinics and voluntary dementia friends groups. We also have direct contact with our care homes and our Community Dementia Practitioners as well as third sector organisations that sign post to our other projects that include Stroke Association and Vale of Clwyd Mind. We also work in partnership with the Older People's Mental Health and Complex Disability Teams within the Community Resource Teams as well St.Kentigern's Hospice.

How many people took/are taking part?

Approximately 90 participants

For how long has it been happening?

April and on-going (for the remote projects but were working with the service users face to face prior to April).

What were/are the main outputs?

Participants are sharing images of the work they are creating at home with us, which we are posting on twitter and on our website virtual gallery. Some participants are also sharing images of their work with each other via What's App groups and this acts as an informal way to keep in touch. With some of the groups, for example our collaboration with South Denbighshire Partnership, the textile art packs we have distributed amongst the shielding elderly residents in this locality will be collected once participants have finished their work and an artist will be commissioned to create a textile piece out of all the artwork. The theme of this tapestry is 'Home' and will feature all the homes which have been our sanctuaries during the pandemic. The artwork created by participants who are supported by MIND, will be

contributing to a community ceramic artwork that will reflect the importance of our landscape and nature during the lockdown.

Evaluation:

We were part of the Dementia and Imagination research project (the only delivery partner in Wales) Evaluation findings can be found at www.dementiaandimagination.org.uk

Feedback:

"Just wanted to let you know that I think it's amazing what you've put together for the Lost in Art group to do during lockdown.... you've obviously put so much thought and effort into it all. Having the WhatsApp group to keep them all in touch and share images and messages has also been great for them."

"My mother loved the marbling project and I was thrilled to receive my beautiful marbled card and envelope in the post. I'm really missing her and so the card meant a lot to me. Hopefully the lockdown restrictions will be eased soon so that I can travel up from London be with her. A huge thank you from myself and my mother to everyone that's been involved." Participant's Daughter

"E said how she could relax and not think of anything else whilst doing it." Participant

"Very pleased for support and to be part of the WhatsApp group and seeing what everyone else is creating." Participant

"I can see the difference in Em when he's occupied. Sleeping now." Participant

"Lost in Art has gone over and above everyone else and deserve a medal." Participant

"Again very, very appreciative of the Art box and all the support and WhatsApp group." Participant

"A Big Thank you to everyone at Lost in Art from F and I we are truly receiving V.I.P. treatment." Participant

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

We believe that we have been successful in redesigning our community arts programme from a face to face participatory programme to a remote delivery one where we have kept in touch with participants through art packs being distributed to homes, keeping in touch phone calls, What's App groups and by sharing tutorial films via email. Participants have expressed how they valued our contact and the opportunity to be creative and to keep in touch with each other.

The challenges have been that not all of our service users have access to smart phone, tablets and wifi. In the early weeks of the pandemic it was also difficult getting hold of personal details in order to make contact with service users as our partners e.g. in social services, were busy dealing with more pressing issues. We have also needed to move at a pace that was comfortable for our partners which has meant that it is only now that we are developing a remote programme for some of our other service users living with mental health problems e.g. the groups we support creatively in partnership with MIND.

Further information

Denbighshire Leisure Ltd's Community Arts Programme is designed to support the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Community Arts Service works to promote, support and develop arts activity in the county. Community Arts provides opportunities for everyone to participate in the arts regardless of experience, age or background. We work with a wide range of partners from the public and third sector as well as voluntary organisations and community groups across the fields of health and wellbeing, education and regeneration. The Community Arts Team has 2 employees and we employ freelance creative practitioners to deliver our projects. It has been our priority during lockdown not only to support our service users but also to support our pool of creative freelancers with work opportunities.