

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

Project: Time and Dance

Organisation: University of Cambridge Museums

Region: East of England

Introduction

Dance and Time with the Museum is a collaboration with dance artist Filipa Pereira - Stubbs. The co-created practice invites participants to take part in shared journeys through art using relaxation, look slowly, movement and learning.

'I'm struggling now; I'm having a really tough time. It's been good to escape into this painting (where) we'd go together to the bottom of the hills and slowly climb to the top and it would be fresh air, freedom.'



Consultation and collaboration with partners and participants, in response to Covid, has focused on people's context, programme relevance and its potential, the ambition being to develop a suite of flexible, engagement routes that can be tailored to need.

For those alone, in sheltered housing, regular small group phone calls, with resources sent by post have been universally popular. Participants share the experience of looking at artworks and talking together through facilitated conversations. The opportunity to step out of concerns of, into a social group to relax and explore art together has proved a potent force for wellbeing.

Working closely with staff at the two care homes, supporting them to deliver sessions has been hungrily received. The delivery is complimented by the *Relax, Look, Imagine* films, postcard correspondence with the Museum and art activity boxes.

Day-centre users and Addenbrookes patients have been enjoying the *Artwork in Focus* postcards which contain discussion prompts and using the *Relax Look Imagine* films to support relaxation and imagination.

The films and postcards will be distributed to care settings in the region Autumn 2020.

Image: Museum images being collated ready for mailing to participants

Funders

National Lottery Community Fund – Building Connections

Cambridge City Council

Arts Council England – The University of Cambridge Museums Consortium is supported by ACE as a Band 3 National Portfolio Organisation

Who is it for?

Older people at risk of social isolation or loneliness: those who are living in sheltered housing or residential care, attending day centres, patients on hospital wards and at the regional hospice. The majority have disabilities and live with chronic health conditions. Many have a form of cognitive impairment.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

The programme is guided by a Theory of Change which identifies:

Ultimate goals

- Contribute to the psychosocial wellbeing of older people living in Cambridgeshire particularly those likely to be affected by loneliness and social isolation
- To shift perceptions of the Museum –to enable participants to see it as a place for everyone as co-creators of a social and cultural community.

Intermediate outcomes

- Emotional Impact: Participants experience an emotional response to the programme feeling happy, uplifted and inspired.
- Connected to others: Participants feel connected and part of a community, forming new relationships and a sense of belonging
- Valued: Participants feel listened to and that their views are relevant and valued
- Informed: Participants learn about art and artefacts, more about themselves and about others in the group
- Feeling Positive: Through ‘doing’ and creating meaning together participants feel more confident and look forward to things. They feel more positive.

Where is it happening?

Cambridgeshire

Are you working in partnership?

- Cambridge City Council Sheltered Housing, Independent Living Service
- Addenbrookes Hospital (see separate case study for full scope of partnership)
- Arthur Rank Hospice
- Holme Close Care Home
- Bramley Court Care Home
- Bedford House Day Centre
- Birches Day Centre

How many people took/are taking part?

Relax, Look, Imagine -time together at home, telephone conference calls, 48 participants

Relax, Look, Imagine -guided relaxation & art exploration films: 1,500+ watched, estimated participants from partner organisations c.200+

Artwork in focus - postcards & posters 1,000+ distributed
Artwork in focus - art activity and postcard exchange packs, 72 participants

For how long has it been happening?

The 'live' programme of Dance and Time with the Museum began in 2017 with outreach and museum visit co-created activity.

The remote programme began (almost immediately as lockdown began) end of March 2020. The programme will continue with the current partners until March 2021; the delivery format will respond to each environment.

What were/are the main outputs?

- Relax, Look, Imagine -*time together at home, telephone conference calls*: Summer 2020, x9 groups (4-6 people per group) x 54 phone sessions (tbc repeat Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021).
- Relax, Look, Imagine -*guided relaxation & art exploration films*: Summer 2020 x7 films, Autumn 2021, 13 additional films; tbc creation of a wellbeing landing page on the UCM website to help further foster a sense of community around the work.
- Artwork in focus, *postcards & posters*: 1,000 have currently been produced by Addenbrookes Hospital for use across the wards and for staff engagement. Summer/Autumn 2020 estimated additional 6,000 to be printed and distributed, extending reach to new care homes and to day centre users, many of whom are currently housebound.
- Artwork in focus, *art activity and postcard exchange packs*: artwork packs with 24 High resolution images with interpretation made for the two care home partners, packs also contain facilitation guidance notes to support staff facilitate the *Relax, Look, Imagine* practice. Tailored art activities, that respond to the artworks and postcard correspondence with the Museums, extend this engagement

Blog posts: to share the activity story

Case studies: again, to share the activity story - various sites

Evaluation:

We are in the process of evaluating activity March – July 2020, working with Hillary Bungay from Anglia Ruskin University, who is the independent evaluator for this work funded through Building Connections.

Feedback:

Relax, Look, Imagine – time together at home, telephone conference calls

'I'm struggling now; I'm having a really tough time. It's been good to escape into this painting (where) we'd go together to the bottom of the hills and slowly climb to the top and it would be fresh air, freedom.'

'It feels luscious, I would put my tent up on the grass... it's the sort of grass you'd take your shoes off and walk barefoot. I think it's fabulous, it's of the moment and with our circumstances it makes me feel happy'

'I found myself out in the fields, it makes me feel richer. I'm observing my world it helps me take time to look again at what's around me'

'This has been the worst of times and we've all really been struggling – I've been in and out of hospital throughout – but we have the art now, we'll always have the art'

Sheltered housing residents

***Relax, Look, Imagine* -guided relaxation & art exploration films**

*"Mr A – said that [the films] made him smile and just forget the day and melt into the picture"
He lives alone and has no social support / other than a neighbour who pops in every day and they talk in the garden. The neighbour has let him borrow a tablet.*

'Mrs D wanted you to know that they now listen to it twice a day, and they can talk about it. It has opened conversations that they have not had for some years'

Feedback from County Council Day Centre partner

Artwork in focus - art activity and postcard exchange packs

Big thank you to Fitzwilliam Museum for supplying us with endless artwork to continue our art sessions. We have had a fantastic afternoon discussing Art and life in general!

Facebook post from Bramley Court Nursing Home (programme partner)

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Challenges

- Furloughed staff – key contacts
- Capacity – consultation is time heavy with the landscape shifting / our understanding deepening
- Resource preparation and distribution at home
- Re-allocation of and securing of funding needed for resource and conference calls
- NHS environment change and adaption
- Pressures on key staff (partnerships), how to best support them whilst ensuring that residents and patients can continue to engage
- Additional time needed for planning and production when working remotely

Success

- Working in smaller groups (group telephone calls) has fostered new and richer relationships, created the conditions for enhanced relaxation, slow looking and sharing and given the space for greater participation for those who may be inhibited by larger group work.
- Flexibility of the films and postcards -fit into peoples lives and be used, engaged with when and where people choose.
- Postcard correspondence with care homes, has created an ongoing dialogue between residents, the homes and the museum and elevated peoples responses through their being captured and shared.

Further information

The University of Cambridge Museums is a consortium of the eight University Museums and the Botanic Garden. The Fitzwilliam Museum is the lead partner in the consortium.

Our collections span four and a half billion years of natural objects, artefacts and art. They are centres of discovery for everyone, and essential research collections for students and academics.

We activate the power of the University through our collections, sharing with our communities and networks to deepen understanding of our world, inspire new thinking, and address local and global challenges.

- [*Relax, look, Imagine - Objects in focus*](#) - UCM blog post
- [*Talking together at home*](#) - UCM blogpost
- [*Continuing connections, non-digital engagement*](#) – Engage case study
- [*Relax Look Imagine*](#) – film series, YouTube