

Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Organisation: Keneish Dance

Region: West Midlands

Designed for: People living in sheltered accommodation

“I loved this, I am going to do some of these exercises in my room before I go to bed”



Image credit: Keneish Dance

Introduction

Keneish Dance is a Birmingham based company specialising in dance and working across art forms. Keneish Dance creates captivating, high quality Afro Contemporary works and experiences for performance, health and innovative events. With an interest in how people think, feel and embody emotions, we aim to challenge audiences whilst still creating and sharing work that's accessible and enjoyable; opening up new dialogue and spaces for dance. We are passionate about heritage just as much as we are about experimenting and so constantly use this tension to energise our aesthetic, themes and approaches in everything we do.

The project includes wellbeing sessions which include dance, mobility and yoga. Currently working with Optivo to provide sessions at Harmony House Sheltered accommodation. Each session lasts 30 – 60 minutes taking place 1 – 2 times per week. The sessions are informal and fun starting off with a catch up to see how everybody is feeling, deep breathing exercises, stretches, mobility exercises into some dancing near end. Some weeks we will focus more on making putting dance movements together and other sessions will be more focused on yogic breathing and stretches, depending on how the residents feel.

Funders

National Lottery Community Fund

Partners

Keneish Dance is a freelancer working in partnership with KD Culture which is a charity.

Who is it for?

People who are 56 – 96 years old who do not come out of their flats and are reluctant to taking part in excersies. Diagnosed with arthritis or are wheelchair bound.

Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

This was a new client funded for the first time by the Community Fund.

How many people took/are taking part?

15 – 52 residents

Where is it happening?

Birmingham

For how long has it been happening?

The work began beginning October 2020 and will continue until at least October 2021.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Hope to reduce joint pain, improve mobility, flexibility, strength, co-ordination and general mood and motivation affected by the context of covid, and arthritis. We also hope to equip people with good breathing techniques to ease COPD symptoms.

Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

Yes, live sessions in small groups of 3–6 and 1:1 happen every other week, with pre-recorded sessions in between that residents individually in their flat.

Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics¹?

Currently the sheltered accommodations houses 15 residents; 2 are Asian, 2 are White and 11 are African – Caribbean. The tutor is Black.

Evaluation & Feedback

We ask participants how they feel at the end and check their facial expressions.

“I loved this, I am going to do some of these exercises in my room before I go to bed”

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

It has worked well, although managing the worry and concern the centre managers had over covid 19 has been the hardest thing. Once sessions start everybody is good and feels relaxed.

¹Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equalities Act 2010).

Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

This was a new client. We will reach more people using the pre-recorded classes although it is hard to evaluate how engaged participants were in embodying the activity.

What would you say has made this project possible?

The tutor, conversations on need, centre manager, participants and community fund.

What would have made it easier?

Locating laptops and technology quickly as we are having to call in informal favours of family and friends to loan laptops for those who do the activity in their flats.

Further information

www.keneishdance/flowpractice