

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

Organisation: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

Region: North East

Designed for: Adults in residential care

Postcards of artwork being written out. (Joanne Charlton)

“All the residents on the dementia unit still have the postcards and they are displayed on their bookcase and we do talk about the postcards to the residents, it is a nice conversation with a cup of tea.”



### Introduction

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) is a major regional museum, art gallery and archives service. We manage a collection of nine venues across Tyneside and the Archives for Tyne and Wear, including 2 Roman Forts and 3 Art Galleries. We are supported by the four local authorities in Tyneside and Newcastle University. TWAM is also a National Portfolio Organisation funded by Arts Council England. We hold collections of international importance in archives, art, science and technology, archaeology, military and social history, fashion and natural sciences.

At the beginning of lockdown we wanted to reach people in residential care homes by sending individuals a postcard showing a piece of artwork from our art galleries. Museum staff members wrote out postcards with a friendly note asking residents what they thought of the painting and telling them a little about the artwork depicted. We set up a freepost address for people to reply if they wanted too. Staff told us the postcards were lovely to receive and that the residents were happy to hear from us. From the replies we received one that stood out was from a 93 year-old lady who remembered the Shipley Art Gallery from her childhood.

### Funders

Arts Council England

## Partners

The postcards were sent to a number of care home partners in the region –

- Eothen Homes - Whitley Bay, Wallsend and Gosforth
- Hadrian Healthcare Group - The Manor – Gosforth and Whickham
- Age UK North Tyneside - Weetslade Court, Sandringham, Hodgson House and Edith Moffatt House
- Parkside Care - The Chesters, Gateshead and Holmlea, North Shields
- Anchor Hanover - Frontburn Court and Thomas Ferguson Court, North Shields
- Prestwick Care - Brooke House, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Ascot Care - St Anne's, Whitley Bay and Westoe Grange South Shields
- Roseberry Care - The Evergreens, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Lenore Care Home, Whitley Bay,
- Care Homes UK - The White House Nursing Home, Jarrow
- Seahaven Residential Care Home, south Shields
- NHS, Haven Court – South Shields
- Hillcare - Willowdene Care Home, Hebburn
- Windsor care home - Hebburn
- St Thomas care home – South Shields

## Who is it for?

Adults living in residential care

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

Both

## How many people took/are taking part?

693 residents in 24 care homes

## Where is it happening?

Tyne & Wear

## For how long has it been happening?

Since May 2020 and ongoing

## What were/are the main outputs?

We encouraged people to write back if they wanted too and asked staff to fill in a small evaluation.

## What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

We hoped to help combat isolation/boredom during lockdown by engaging with people in care homes who had little contact with family and friends outside the home.

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

We could not invite people into our galleries in person. So we sent postcards showcasing our gallery's paintings to people in residential care homes to enjoy.

## Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>?

We aimed to support the older generation living in residential care homes.

### Evaluation & Feedback

Care home staff have been asked to fill in a short evaluation. Here is what we asked:

- As a result of this postcard project have you notice positive mood changes in residents?
- Do residents look forward to hearing from TWAM staff via postcard?
- Do residents talk to each other and staff about the postcard project?
- Has being involved in the postcard project led to residents becoming involved in any other activities or interests?
- Has being involved in the postcard project impacted residents in any other way (positive or negative)?
- Would you like to tell us anything else?

Here are a few examples of the replies we have:

*As a result of this postcard project have you noticed positive mood changes in residents?*

“Yes all were delighted/tickled/ happy about receiving them. Obviously in those with cognitive issues the feelings were fleeting but others have mentioned the cards in subsequent conversations and all still have them in their rooms.”

*Has being involved in the postcard project led to residents becoming involved in any other activities or interests?*

“I couldn't say yes. We've had a few letter-writing projects over my time here. They are enjoyed but I couldn't say they lead to other things.”

*Would you like to tell us anything else?*

“Museum staff Janet was considerate to those with sight issues and printed her message nice and big. This was appreciated.”

Other comments:

“All the residents on the dementia unit still have the postcards and they are displayed on their bookcase and we do talk about the postcards to the residents it is a nice conversation with a cup of tea.

The residents on our residential floor do appreciate the cards you have sent again they are still displayed in their rooms, they all thought it was a wonderful of you to take the time to send them and they do appreciate it.” (Sheila Thornton, Lifestyle Coordinator, The Manor, Gosforth)

Here is a Tweet from Everyday Care UK showing the residents with their postcards along with some artwork they also received.

<https://twitter.com/theshipley/status/1282708934160195585>

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

In the uncertainty of lockdown I enjoyed co-ordinating and sending/receiving postcards. At the beginning of the project the challenges we faced were ‘how do we get the postcards to staff members? How do the staff members get the postcards to the care homes?’ We overcame this by working out how much approximate postage costs would be and staff members received a pack with the postcards, envelopes, various stamps and kitchen scales if they needed them to work out the

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

weight/price of sending a pile of postcards through the post. We also set up a freepost address for any replies to be sent directly back to us.

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

We have reached a lot more people than we usually would. A large percentage of these new people are new contacts.

### What would you say has made this project possible?

Working from home and co-ordinating members of staff who are enthusiastic about continuing to engage with people.

### Further information

<https://www.twmuseums.org.uk>