

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

Project: Dance and Time with the Museum
Organisation: University of Cambridge Museums
Region: East of England

“it’s been really good to keep in touch with the Museum, it’s been very special, as we haven’t been able to do this with any of our other community partnerships. With all the art work you have provided you’ve helped us keep it going and alive and you’ve adapted to our needs brilliantly, it’s been a rich exchange of ideas.”



Bramley Court Care Home residents enjoying a private visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum, their first post shielding outing

Introduction

Our Dance and Time with the Museum programme included support for older adults in residential care homes and the staff working with them.

The programme adapted activities previously delivered by museum staff as outreach, or during museum visits. With this no longer possible, care home staff were instead equipped to support residents’ wellbeing, using resources provided by the museum. Staff brought together small groups to engage with artwork from the Fitzwilliam Museum collection.

Copies of museum paintings were distributed with written information for the care home staff to share with residents. This information described the artwork and invited the participants to travel through the painting, and to share their ideas, thoughts, memories and feelings.

Art boxes were also delivered to care homes, containing a range of quality art materials and activities relating to the Museum’s collection to extend the engagement. Packs of post cards of the collections

were also included so residents could correspond with family and friends who could no longer visit the care home.

Seven short films, Relax, Look, Imagine, were made about individual paintings from the Fitzwilliam Museum Collection echoing the way the onsite programme is usually delivered, with music, relaxation and slow immersive looking. These have been watched by residents and staff and shared with family and friends.

Funders

National Lottery Community Fund through the Building Connections initiative
Arts Council England – The University of Cambridge Museums Consortium is supported by ACE as a Band 3 National Portfolio Organisation and key staff delivering this work are funded by ACE

Partners

Bramley Court Care Home; Home Close Care Home; Danceworks, with lead artist Filipa Pereira-Stubbs

Who is it for?

Older adults in residential care homes, their families and care home staff.

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

Both

How many people took/are taking part?

144 care home residents

Care home staff

Additional family members and friends through the care home's Facebook group

Where is it happening?

Cambridgeshire

For how long has it been happening?

The 'Dance and Time with the Museum' programme has been part of the Museum's inclusion work in 2016, initially engaging elderly people living in sheltered housing schemes and living independently in the community. From Autumn 2019, we offer to day centres, a local hospice, and care homes in the community, with support from the National Lottery Community fund through the Building Connections initiative. Since March 2020, the programme has been delivered remotely, and is ongoing.

What were/are the main outputs?

Printed copies of paintings, artist information and delivery notes have been copied and shared within the care homes across their different community groups, residential, dementia and nursing. This has enabled small group and one to one engagement to continue.

The residents engaging with the Art Box activities have made cards and art works and written post cards which they have been able to send to family and friends during 'Lock down'.

Seven '[Relax, Look, Imagine](#)' guided relaxation and art films were made, and these have been used in care homes in group settings:

We have created [Blog posts to share learning with sector](#), and the care home have shared residents' experiences and their creative outputs on Facebook so that friends and families could also share in the experience.

The Fitzwilliam Museum re-opened in August 2020 and were able to offer an exclusive visit for care home residents and staff. Bramley Court Care Home had three private visits for groups of six residents and staff, with two more scheduled. It was their first time out of the care home in 5 months.

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.

In the context of COVID, within this framework we have had a particular emphasis on supporting mental wellbeing, helping to combat high levels of stress and anxiety resulting from Covid-19 and not being able to have visits from family and friends during 'lock down'. Helping care home staff in supporting residents and their families to maintain connectivity and meaningful sharing through the films and post cards as well as conversations has been immensely important.

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

Prior to Covid-19 the Dance and Time with the Museum programme was delivered by the museums inclusion team both in the care home settings and in the Fitzwilliam Museum. When care homes closed to visitors in order to shield residents at the start of COVID lockdown, the programme had to be adapted to enable care home staff to deliver the activities with remote support from the museum team. This included ongoing dialogue to understand need, and the creation of a variety of resources including art boxes, printed images and conversation prompts, and films that could be watched on individual tablets or by groups of care home residents in TV rooms.

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

The programme worked with older people in residential care homes. Many of these also have a disability.

Evaluation & Feedback

Care Home Activities Co-ordinator:

"it's been really good to keep in touch with the Museum, it's been very special, as we haven't been able to do this with any of our other community partnerships. With all the art work you have provided

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

you've helped us keep it going and alive and you've adapted to our needs brilliantly, it's been a rich exchange of ideas."

"We are now meeting twice a week to watch the you tube videos so cleverly done ...We are working in smaller groups of six. We plan to also book the cinema space out for our nursing community to have the opportunity to view and discuss"

"Today we looked at '[A Gust of Wind](#)' by Renoir, lots of discussion about the clouds and how fluid and accomplished they are. We all debated the dark area left of centre, it looked like a bonfire to some of us. Some of us commented on how peaceful it seemed even though it was such a fluid piece of work"

'Residents are starting to get into the swing of the focus/ relaxation element on the video and enjoying that too.'

Care Home Manager:

"Ensuring our residents have continued to live vibrant and stimulating lives throughout lockdown has been so important to us and the on-going arts partnership with the museum has been integral to this. The whole process has been enormously enriching and rewarding for all involved."

Care Home Facebook:

"Big thank you to the Fitzwilliam Museum, for supplying endless art work to continue our art sessions. We have had a fantastic afternoon discussing art and life in general. The post of residents engaging with the art work on Facebook was well received by family and friends."

Care Home resident, on her recent visit to the Museum:

"I've had a lifelong interest in art and I was thrilled to be visiting the Museum again."

Care Home resident's daughter:

"I found the videos (Relax, Look, Imagine art films) really interesting. Calm and conscious attention to movement and art are brought together wonderfully. I'm sure my mum and many others will gain so much from these."

By maintaining close and regular contact with the Care Home key members of staff they provide us with feedback from the residents as well as their own, and by following their Facebook page we are also able to gather feedback from family.

Feedback on how the Dance and Time with the Museum programme is being received by residents is shared in phone conversations, email and Facebook posts, and through a more formal extended interview with Activities Coordinator at the Care Home. We have also gathered feedback through conversations with Care Home residents and staff when they had their recent exclusive visit to the Museum. We are working with an external evaluator based at Anglia Ruskin University to evaluate the programme as a whole, in relation to an agreed set of outcomes, taking a story of change approach.

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

Challenges:

No longer being able to visit the care homes and they not being able to visit the museum. Being aware that the care home staff are under far greater pressure having to implement measures to protect and support the residents and their families as a result of Covid-19. Museum staff adapting to working from home and finding and developing new ways of working with the care homes.

Successes:

The partnership has developed as the relationship between key members of staff at the care home and the museum team has strengthened and both greatly value what is being achieved through the programme.

Providing a wide range of options for engagement with art has enabled the care home staff to support the wide range of needs of the residents across the residential, dementia and nursing communities within the care home.

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

More people as the films, post cards and art have been shared with family and friends of the care home residents and staff as well as the residents themselves.

What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

A variety of digital skills.

What would you say has made this project possible?

- Established partnership with the Care Homes, including the fact that care home staff had experienced the programme and seen the museum staff and artist model delivery, so had something to base their approach on.
- Funding being in place and funders taking a flexible approach, accepting changes to delivery models and budget lines to enable us to achieve the desired outcomes in a different way.
- Commitment from museum Senior Management, including ensuring all learning and engagement staff remained unfurloughed.
- Commitment from Care Home staff.
- Skilled and motivated project team, both Museum and Care Home.

What would have made it easier?

Stronger digital capacity; a longer lead in time.

Further information

The University of Cambridge Museums is a consortium of the eight University Museums and the Botanic Garden.

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.

This project has focussed on the collections of the Fitzwilliam museum, the University's principal museum of art and antiquities.

Project films: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDhExi_byiwk6YKa0oSgfNtzsTTQc72w0

Blog including project feedback:

<https://www.museums.cam.ac.uk/blog/2020/07/28/there-is-a-piece-of-me-inside-this-painting-now/>