

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

Project: The Wednesday Wave / Love through Double Glazing

Organisation: Vamos Theatre

Region: West Midlands

Designed for: Care homes

“Love Through Double Glazing made me realise how long it’s been since we laughed so much.”



The Wednesday Wave, Vamos Theatre. Photo: Graeme Braidwood.

### Introduction

Vamos Theatre is the UK’s leading full-mask theatre company, established in 2006. We make accessible, humorous, human, and fearless theatre which is based on real life stories, rooted strongly in social research. Since 2012-13, our work has reached 165,000+ people, including 150,000 audiences, and more than 15,000 through our learning & participation programmes.

Led by Artistic Director Rachael Savage, we tour a full-scale mask theatre production annually, as well as performing at national and international festivals and events. We share our skills in schools, with NHS staff, in care homes, with teachers, carers, social workers, the Deaf community, business leaders and more.

We are currently running two projects:

- A) The Wednesday Wave – a national and international campaign to combat loneliness amongst care home residents and anyone who feel isolated during the current pandemic. On Wednesdays, from 14 October until 16 December 2020, anyone and everyone is encouraged to wave. To show you are pledging to wave, there are the options of displaying a poster, where appropriate, or a hand drawing. The impact that a friendly wave can have on loneliness is huge, and those who are isolating must not be forgotten. More than 80 care homes across the country have pledged to take part. Throughout the ten weeks, we’ll be promoting stories and pictures of those taking part, encouraging more and more people to join in. More info at [www.thewednesdaywave.co.uk](http://www.thewednesdaywave.co.uk)
- B) Love Through Double Glazing – Pilot – a new performance for care homes staged entirely outside, but viewed from the inside where it’s warm and safe. Love Through Double Glazing is performed by Cirque du Soleil clown performer Sean Kempton and Vamos Theatre Artistic

Director Rachael Savage. Funny, cheeky and unashamedly silly, Love Through Double Glazing brings you clowning, music, food fights, bubbles and ballet, even a real life dog, creating the ultimate armchair enjoyment – all from the safety of your window seat. Alongside this, we will also be delivering 50 Joy In A Box care packages to care homes, containing 24 sensory activities for residents to take part in throughout December in the run up to Christmas.

## Funders

We are funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation for 2018 - 2023. Love Through Double Glazing and Joy in a Box has received additional funding from: Sir Barry Jackson Trust, Richard Cadbury, Creative Scotland, the Glencora Fund, Worcestershire County Council - Councillor Divisional Funds.

## Partners

- A) The Wednesday Wave – we are working together with a range of organisations including national care-home providers, local organisations and groups including faith organisations, local schools, Healthcare Consultant Hazel Ratcliffe, Runwood Homes and Stanfield Nursing Home in Rushwick.
- B) Love Through Double Glazing – We are working closely with 8 residential care providers in Worcestershire and Warwickshire and Healthcare Consultant Hazel Ratcliffe in the development of the project and initial pilot performances in Autumn/Winter 2020. The project will be developed further during 2021 and 2022, as part of a commission with the London International Mime Festival to support its further development and roll out. Several Worcestershire County Councillors are supporting the project's development and performances in their local divisions. For Joy in a Box we are working closely with Movement Play specialists JABADAO.

## Who is it for?

- A) Inspired by our previous work with care-home residents and our recent BBC Culture in Quarantine Commission "How Hard is Waving?" (available on BBC iPlayer [here](#)), The Wednesday Wave aims to benefit care home residents and anyone who feels isolated during the current pandemic. This feels particularly important as we head into a winter season with continuing restrictions in place at a variety of levels across the country. More than half a million vulnerable people are unable to leave their homes due to coronavirus. The project aims to be relevant to anyone feeling isolated during this period, whether old or young, and for a variety of reasons.
- B) Love Through Double Glazing and Joy In A Box have been created specifically for residents in care homes, including those living with dementia, and is based on our previous work and experience in this area (see details on our previous Strategic Touring Project [here](#)). As part of an initial 8 performance pilot tour this Autumn, we will be going to the grounds and gardens of a range of residential and nursing homes across Worcestershire and Warwickshire. We will also be trialling a version of the performance for younger and elderly adults with sensory impairment and learning disabilities in Kidderminster.

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

Both

## How many people took/are taking part?

- A) The Wednesday Wave - estimated minimum 2400 care home residents taking part (that we know about – it is much harder to quantify the wider numbers)
- B) Love Through Double Glazing – up to 426 residents across 8 residential care settings – and up to 2500 residents through 50 Joy In A Box care packages.

### Where is it happening?

- A) The Wednesday Wave – nationally.
- B) Love Through Double Glazing – Worcestershire (Worcester, Malvern, Kidderminster) and Warwickshire (Southam, Shipston-on-Stour, Bilton, Stratford-upon-Avon)

### For how long has it been happening?

- A) The Wednesday Wave – 14<sup>th</sup> October – 16th December 2020
- B) Love Through Double Glazing - pilot phase to be delivered by 20 December 2020, but the project will continue into 2021 and beyond. Joy In A Box will be delivered to care settings in late November for use throughout the month of December 2020.

### What were/are the main outputs?

- A) The Wednesday Wave – people participating in the activity across 10 weeks, sharing of images, news stories, competition entries and creative responses (i.e. residents and members of the public's craft activities on the theme of waving), news features on both BBC Midlands Today and ITV Central news (both on 14 October launch day).
- B) Love Through Double Glazing – 8 x pilot performances to c. 400 residents – and 50 x Joy In A Box care packages reaching c. 2500 residents.

### What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

- A) The Wednesday Wave – Since Covid-19, over 30% of adults in the UK say their well-being has been affected and 2.6 million adults have reported that they feel lonely often or always (Office for National Statistics). Due to Covid-19 restrictions on visiting loved ones, people in care homes are amongst those at most risk of chronic loneliness.

By the simple act of waving, the project aims to counteract a number of the detrimental health impacts of loneliness, including increased risks of: high blood pressure; coronary heart disease and stroke; severe depression (associated with early mortality); greater risk of cognitive decline and dementia; and ultimately the likelihood to increase risk of death (by 26%)

(<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>).

We ultimately hope people will be inspired connecting with each other through the simple act of waving and continue beyond the 10 weeks of the project.

- B) Love Through Double Glazing – this pilot project aims to build upon the benefits of our previous performance project Sharing Joy, in a new production that can be performed during the Covid-19 Pandemic (subject to local restrictions) and in a Covid-safe way. Benefits include: encouraging a re-engagement with culture; encourage participation to improve mental and physical health; encourage attention and communication, well-being and contentment; giving people living with dementia the opportunity to connect in alternative ways.

Joy in a Box will build upon these benefits through a range of sensory based activities in an advent calendar format (including music playlists for getting up in the morning, bed-time etc, a copy of Sharing Joy to watch, festive ideas fun activities including with balloons, bubbles, scarves and giant elastics). The boxes will leave resources and ideas for carers and activity coordinators to continue in the care settings beyond December 2020 and therefore having a longer impact on well-being.

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

Both projects are new, but both have been inspired by and build upon our previous work in care-home settings, with learning disabilities, with the NHS and the wider healthcare sector.

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

Diversity is at the centre of our work, from our Vision and Ethos, to our Artistic Objectives and as part of our commitment to Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity. Diversity is a through-line in the stories that inspire us, who we work with and how we work to develop audiences, utilising the power of mask theatre to tap directly into the power of empathy and shared human experiences. Through intensive research in the preparation of our productions we aim to give a voice to people affected by the subject matter of our work, feeding the diversity of our work and back into our artistic practice and future planning and working with organisations such as SENSE, National Star College (for people with complex disabilities) and our own inclusive youth theatre group Vamos Central. Both The Wednesday Wave and Love Through Double Glazing projects aim to reach a diverse range of people in residential care settings (including those who are elderly, living with dementia and with learning disabilities), as well as people in the wider community with protected characteristics. Diversity of our creative team an area of continuous development and we actively work to increase opportunities to diversify our workforce. This includes hosting artistic development days targeting a diverse range of participants (including those who may experience racism or discrimination) and working with a range of key partners including London International Mime Festival (LIMF), movement play specialists JABADAO, and champions of D/deaf and disabled actors Graeae Theatre. We ultimately aim for our work and our audiences to be as accessible as possible.

### Evaluation & Feedback

#### A) The Wednesday Wave

"It really is lovely to see my family, I can't see them as much as I normally would but to see them out there in the rain made me smile."

"First of all I found it a bit strange to wave to people outside; but the people at the bus stop started waving back and smiling at me."

Residents from Kathryn Court Care Home, Essex (Runwood Homes)

#### B) Love Through Double Glazing

"Love Through Double Glazing made me realise how long it's been since we laughed so much." Richard White, Director, Stanfield Nursing Home.

We are gathering data from a range of sources, which is being regularly monitored so that the findings can help improve project delivery, both now and in the future.

A) The Wednesday Wave – gathering a range of quantitative and qualitative data including press, social media, comments from and contact with residential care settings and other project partners including schools, faith organisations and other community groups/organisations.

B) Love Through Double Glazing and Joy in a Box – quantitative data including number of audiences and participants from each setting. We want to gather qualitative data in a way that is manageable for care settings as we are aware they are under extreme pressure at the moment. We will ask residential care settings to ask residents two questions: "Did you enjoy that" and "How did that make you feel?"

### Further information

[www.vamostheatre.co.uk](http://www.vamostheatre.co.uk)

[www.thewednesdaywave.co.uk](http://www.thewednesdaywave.co.uk)

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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).