

**JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE  
9 MARCH 2016**

**ARTS AND REMINISCENCE ACTIVITY PROGRAMME IN  
RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES**

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**Recommendation**

- 1. The Museums General Manager recommends that the progress made in developing activities for older people in residential care homes be noted.**

**Background**

2. Museums Worcestershire has developed expertise in recent years in reminiscence and arts projects, working with older people in care homes and other settings. Initially this was delivered using Museum on the Move as a focus for the work. With the Museum on the Move project reaching the end of its life due to a decline in funding, new ways are being explored of working in partnership to continue to deliver positive health outcomes for older residents in the City and County. This helps to contribute to one of the service's strategic objectives:

*To improve health, volunteering and learning opportunities in local communities*

3. This report sets out the programme and benefits of one project working with Wychavon District Council.
4. Between 29 September - 10 December 2015, a pilot programme of 30 arts & reminiscence activity sessions was delivered in 6 care homes in the Wychavon District Council area. During the programme:
  - 102 individual dementia care home residents participated at least once
  - 196 hands-on engagements took place
  - 29% of participants took part in 3 or more sessions each.
5. The six care homes were:
  - Bricklehampton Hall Nursing Home, Pershore
  - Greenhill Park Care Home, Evesham
  - The Hawthorns Nursing Home, Evesham
  - The Priory Rest Home, Droitwich
  - Rashwood Care Home, Wychbold
  - Willow Bank Residential Home, Throckmorton

## The value of arts & reminiscence activity for dementia patients

6. Arts Council England, which now drives policy for the arts and museums sector, this January published the findings of a survey<sup>1</sup> which showed the different ways in which older people (aged 65+) value arts and culture. The headline findings demonstrate that older people themselves recognise its value:

- 76% of older people say arts and culture is **important in making them feel happy**
- 57% say arts and culture is important in **helping them meet other people**
- 60% say it is important in **encouraging them to get out and about**

7. Museums Worcestershire and Wychavon District Council have brought their expertise together and looked to make a difference to the lives of those diagnosed with dementia and encourage participants to:

- increase participation
- keep learning
- reduce isolation
- develop self-expression
- encourage connection
- promote relaxation.

## Content

8. Each session began with the introduction of the week's reminiscence theme, where our museum outreach staff would pass around items from the reminiscence suitcases and encourage participants to handle items and share any memories or thoughts that came to mind. The themes generated different levels of interest depending on their familiarity to the participants. The chosen themes were:

- Nature
- Holidays
- Hobbies, games & relaxation
- Families, royalty, pets & celebrations
- Shopping, hair & beauty.

9. After approximately 20 minutes of dedicated reminiscence activity, the art activity was introduced. The artist brought with her a range of visual stimuli (books, pictures, photographs, postcards) and art materials, and had prepared 5 different art activities for residents to try over the series of sessions:

- mark-making and brushwork (to make a hanging bird)
- pastels and watercolour (drawing)
- mirror patterns and painting (to make butterflies)
- print-making (card-making)
- marbling
- cake decoration.

## Wellbeing survey

10. New Economics Foundation Wellbeing durational survey - Staff at one care home were able to apply the survey throughout the five sessions. The 7 participants were not consistently present throughout the series, which may explain the dip in engagement observed in week 4:

| Week no:                                    | 1                                | 2 | 3                                | 4                         | 5 |                |
|---|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|----------------|
| <b>DID THE PEOPLE YOU CARE FOR SEEM...?</b> |                                  |   |                                  |                           |   | <b>Average</b> |
| To be enjoying themselves                   | 5                                | 5 | 5                                | 5                         | 5 | 5              |
| Happy or contented                          | 5                                | 5 | 5                                | 5                         | 5 | 5              |
| Engaged or focused                          | 4                                | 5 | 5                                | 4                         | 5 | 5              |
| Energised or lively                         | 4                                | 5 | 5                                | 4                         | 5 | 5              |
| Engaging confidently with people            | 4                                | 5 | 5                                | 4                         | 5 | 5              |
| Relaxed                                     | 5                                | 5 | 5                                | 4                         | 5 | 5              |
| Physically coordinated                      | 4                                | 5 | 5                                | 3                         | 5 | 4              |
| Able to make up their own mind              | 2                                | 4 | 5                                | 3                         | 5 | 4              |
| To be thinking clearly                      | 4                                | 5 | 4                                | 3                         | 5 | 4              |
| Finding everything an effort                | 1                                | 1 | 2                                | 3                         | 1 | 2              |
| Depressed                                   | 1                                | 1 | 1                                | 1                         | 1 | 1              |
| Lonely                                      | 1                                | 1 | 1                                | 1                         | 1 | 1              |
| <i>No of participants</i>                   | 7                                | 5 | 7                                | 2                         | 5 |                |
| <b>KEY</b>                                  |                                  | 3 | Some of the session (20-44 mins) |                           |   |                |
| 5   | Whole session (60 mins +)        |   | 2                                | Briefly (20 mins or less) |   |                |
| 4   | Most of the session (45-59 mins) |   | 1                                | Not at all                |   |                |

These scores were offset against the participants observed behaviours on a day when no extra activities were taking place.

## Quotes

11. As the sessions went on, regular participants felt confident enough to bring their own contributions:

*"D\*\*\* had again brought relevant items: part of her wonderful cards collection, a scrap-book of old Evesham, some beautiful tapestry and embroidery. L\*\*\* also showed a fine embroidered tray-cloth with a Chinese dragon. It's encouraging that, having announced the following week's topic, some residents contribute items to look at."*

Practitioner 1's observations, Week 8

*"All [themes] were popular and touched on the unique experiences of individuals in the group ... People liked to dress up and wear the hat, necklaces and sun glasses. Humorous items in the luggage went down well. They also seemed to like the Royal family books, hobbies, nature- birds eggs, holidays. There was*

*something in the suitcase for everyone. The smells went down well, the carbolic soap woke one lady up!"*

Practitioner 2's observations

## Conclusions

12. Evaluating the impact of cultural activity on dementia patients is a difficult exercise. It is not possible conclusively to prove that any one action is directly responsible for an individual's continued quality of life. However, observation of and anecdotal responses about the effect of the arts and reminiscence sessions, minute to minute, on the participants in this activity programme, strongly suggests that participation in **the sessions contributed positively to their ongoing quality of life.**

13. By **building connections** between Wychavon DC Community Development team, Museums Worcestershire and care home teams, the practitioners enabled otherwise potentially isolated care home residents to **develop new means of self-expression.** The combination of reminiscence, conversation, art, craft and new company over a prolonged period of time (5 weeks), **provided an enjoyable activity** for participants, and, for care staff, an **opportunity to learn more about** their residents.

14. The results of this project have given us the foundations to look at continuing this project across all of Worcestershire's districts on the successful submission of grant applications in the next few months. Most of the districts have now agreed to commission part of the project, allowing us to develop a larger grant bid to Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts programme.

15. The project was shared with Public Health England West Midlands, NHS staff, the wider cultural sector and other stakeholders at the Creative Commissioning Conference in November 2015. This day was aimed at making connections between the arts and public sector outcomes to improve Wellbeing, and allowed the project leads to share our findings so far. The complete evaluation report of the project will be shared during March 2016.

## Contact Points

### County Council Contact Points

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

<sup>1</sup> Undertaken by ComRes, (January 2016) URL: <http://www.comres.co.uk/polls/arts-council-england-older-people-poll/>