



# **Creativity Matters: First Year Evaluation Report**

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## **Creativity Matters: First Year Evaluation (Executive Summary)**

‘Creativity Matters’ is a 5 year project, launched by Equal Arts in January 2012 and funded by the Big Lottery. Through the project, artist facilitators support volunteers and residential care staff to engage in the meaningful use of creativity within older people’s care contexts in Gateshead and South Shields. The aims of the project are to:

- Provide active older people living in the community with opportunities to develop their own creative interests and skills and to contribute to their communities.
- Develop the capacities of care staff to offer a more person-centred approach to the care of older people living in residential care.
- Combat isolation and improve the quality of life of older people with dementia, living in residential care homes.
- Contribute to the evidence base regarding the benefits of creative activity for older people’s wellbeing.

Through semi-structured interviews with four project stakeholders; the observation of eight workshops with volunteers, care staff and residents; two focus groups with volunteers; and solicited diaries, it was identified that:

- Significant progress was made during Year One towards key project milestones, with the recruitment of a project manager, two professional and experienced artist facilitators, two volunteer groups and three care homes. A project steering group was also established. The project manager, artist facilitators and volunteers were praised by stakeholders for the quality of their contribution to the project.
- While all stakeholders shared a common understanding of the aims of the project, project managers placed a greater emphasis on challenging the culture of care within care homes, while the artist facilitators placed greater emphasis on improving the wellbeing of the volunteers and older people living in residential care.
- ‘Grand Gestures’ is a 12-member strong volunteer group, based in Gateshead. The volunteers meet weekly to develop their dance and movement skills. The concept of supporting creative activity within care homes was introduced to the group several weeks into the project, with mixed reactions. Grand Gestures has evolved into a confident performance group with a strong sense of collective identity, as well as a supportive group of volunteers. The sessions have significantly developed the group’s creative skills and confidence and sparked other aspects of the members’ creativity. Volunteers discussed their enjoyment of the sessions, the new friendships made and the profound physical and emotional benefits derived from the training sessions.
- The second group of volunteers is 10-members strong and based in South Shields. The focus of the group is music and singing. From the outset, volunteers understood their role in the project to be centred on supporting creative activity in care homes and were comfortable with this. The ukulele group has a sense of collective identity and are committed to developing their creative skills and supporting activity in care homes.
- The project engaged with three care homes in Year One. Engagement consisted of two hour, weekly sessions for a period of ten weeks, with the focus being the transference of the artist and volunteers’ creative skills to care staff and providing the residents with an enjoyable experience to enhance their quality.
- Responsibility for oversight of the project within the care homes was typically delegated to activities coordinators.
- Equal Arts were reported to have made it clear that the project had a workforce development focus.
- The care homes wanted to participate in the project as music-based activities are thought to be accessible and enjoyable to the residents and it was hoped that the training element of the project would support the sustainability of music-based activities within the homes in a context of limited resources.
- Informal training was undertaken with the volunteer groups before going into the care homes and in one case, an induction session between staff and volunteers was held.
- Stakeholders spoke of the residents’ enjoyment of the sessions – evidenced by feedback, increased levels of smiling, energy and laughter among the residents – and their enhanced ‘outlooks’ following the sessions. The sessions were also felt to have empowered residents – providing them with an identity which is not linked to their personal limitations – and to have enhanced relationships between staff and residents and increased the sense of community shared between residents.
- Volunteers found supporting activity within the care homes to be a positive experience and spoke of the sense of enjoyment, satisfaction and achievement derived from this. All stakeholders commented on the value of the emotional and practical support provided by the volunteers to both residents and staff during the sessions,

although there was some confusion regarding the scope/boundary of the volunteers' role in respect of supporting the residents.

- Care staff also found participation to be a positive experience; having developed their creative skills and confidence to lead creative activity with the residents. The project was also reported to have provided staff with an opportunity to reflect upon their roles and the ways in which they engage with residents. Some staff would have welcomed a greater focus on training during the ten-week programme to enable them to develop their creative skills further and to develop their confidence to put these skills into practice.
- An unanticipated outcome of the project is its positive impact on the experiences of the residents' relatives when visiting the home – specifically, on the quality of time spent with their relatives and on the relationships with staff and other residents.
- A key challenge for the project remains creating a 'legacy' within the care homes. In only one care home have the sessions continued beyond the ten-week programme, linked to: perceptions of the project; lack of understanding among some care staff of the benefits of creativity activity for the residents and limited opportunities to reflect upon this; lack of management support for the sessions (impacting on the resourcing of sessions); lack of co-ordination within the homes between key groups of staff (i.e. managers, dementia champions, activities coordinators and carers); and under-developed relationships between volunteers and care homes.

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations were identified:

1. The core project team meet to reflect upon key learning points from Year One and agree on key objectives and associated actions for Year Two.
2. The project is promoted to care homes as an initiative which contributes to their long-term agendas, particularly around creating 'dementia-friendly communities' and 'person-centred' approaches to care, rather than as an 'arts for elders' project. This may help incentivise more meaningful engagement with the project.
3. The targeted recruitment of care homes that are more likely to embrace the ethos of the project. This could be achieved by utilising links such as the Care Alliance or identifying suitable care homes through project sharing/promotion events.
4. The targeted recruitment of volunteers who are likely to form lasting relationships with specific care homes. This may include the recruitment of relatives of residents to the project.
5. Hosting a sharing event in Year Two would help raise the profile of the project, promote the ethos of the project, celebrate the achievements of project participants and support the recruitment of volunteers and care homes to the project.
6. A formal induction to the project for care home managers and staff may enhance the outcomes of the project. This may constitute an initial session dedicated solely to care staff, covering topics such as: the benefits of creativity activity to older people's wellbeing, the aims of the project, the structure of the programme and the responsibilities/expectations of all project stakeholders.
7. A more formal training process for participating care staff may also support the achievement of outcomes/impacts. This may include: a greater proportion of the programme being dedicated to developing the creative, facilitation and reflective practice skills of care staff; engagement with residents taking the form of a more 'staged' process; care staff being given clearly assigned roles during the sessions; the inclusion of a debriefing process at the end of each session to nurture staff understanding of the outcomes/impacts of the sessions; and, the dedication of the final session of the programme to supporting staff to develop an agreed action plan regarding the sustainability of the sessions. A follow-up meeting with the care homes may also be useful in encouraging the continuation of the sessions.
8. Certificates should be produced for staff who take part in the project to evidence their achievements. This may also help to demonstrate the value of the project to wider members of staff within the homes.
9. A formal induction and training process for volunteers may be beneficial, providing an opportunity to clearly outline the aims and objectives of the project to volunteers, emphasise their intended role within the project and discuss any health and safety issues which may arise when supporting activity with the care homes, for example. The delivery of the sessions by the project manager would be useful in terms of consistency and demonstrating to volunteers that they are part of a larger initiative. It may also be beneficial in terms of separating the formal elements of the project from the volunteers' creative spaces/processes.
10. A greater focus on 'peer-learning' within the project process – i.e. enabling volunteers to play a greater mentoring role in relation to care staff – may enhance relations between care staff and volunteers and in turn encourage the continuation/collaborative delivery of the sessions beyond the ten-week programme.

## Creativity Matters: First Year Evaluation Report

### Introduction

'Creativity Matters' is a 5 year project, launched by Equal Arts in January 2012 and funded by the Big Lottery. The project is targeted at three distinct groups of beneficiaries:

- Active older people in the community (Volunteers)
- Care staff in residential care homes
- The residents of care homes

The project is based on the concept of artist facilitators supporting volunteers and residential care staff to engage in the meaningful use of creativity within older people's care contexts in Gateshead and South Shields. The aims of the project are to:

- Provide active older people living in the community with opportunities to develop their own creative interests and skills and to contribute to their communities
- Develop the capacities of care staff to offer a more person-centred approach to the care of older people living in residential care.
- Combat isolation and improve the quality of life of older people with dementia, living in residential care homes.
- Contribute to the evidence base regarding the benefits of creative activity for older people's wellbeing.

The peer-led approach to the project represents a new and innovative method of working for Equal Arts. Accordingly the five year evaluation will be underpinned by the principles of 'action research'. In addition to documenting project progress and capturing outcomes and impact, the evaluation will represent an on-going process of dialogue between the evaluator and project stakeholders, with the findings being used to inform the future development of the project. This first report outlines project activities undertaken and progress achieved in Year One, difficulties encountered regarding the project delivery model, emerging evidence of the outcomes and impacts of the project in relation to the three project beneficiary groups and recommendations going forward.

### Methodology

During Year One, the evaluation focused on the collection of qualitative data through a mix of both traditional and more creative methodologies. The data collection process involved:

- *Semi structured interviews with core project stakeholders*; strategic and operational project managers and artist facilitators. The interviews were wide ranging and involved critical discussions regarding: the background to the project; project aims and objectives; the project delivery model; project achievements, outcomes and impact; difficulties encountered during the project process; and suggested developments for Year Two.
- *Semi-structured interviews with three staff from one participating residential care homes*. The interviews focused on: how they came to be involved in the project; their expectations of the project; their thoughts on the project delivery model; the outcomes and impacts of participation in the project on the residents, themselves and the wider culture within the care home in which they work; and suggestions for the development of the project in future years.
- *Observation of eight workshops with volunteers, care staff and residents*.
- *Two focus group interviews with one of the project volunteer groups*. The focus group discussions centred on: motivations for participation in the project; activities undertaken; the outcomes and impacts of participation in the project on themselves, as well as their perceptions of outcomes and impact on care staff and residents where applicable; and suggested improvements to the project delivery model.
- *An online blog which enabled an on-going process of dialogue and reflection between the artist facilitators and volunteers*.

- *Solicited diaries* which were produced by the artist facilitators each week following the sessions, documenting their own personal reflections on the workshops, as well as those of the volunteers, care staff and residents.

The research foci, methodology and findings will also be informed and supported by an *on-going literature review*, which will contextualise the project within the broader policy context and body of academic and grey literature on related issues.

## **Research Findings**

### ***Project Management and Recruitment***

The project team has made significant progress towards the key milestones identified in the project plan for Year One. In January 2012, a part-time Project Manager was appointed to support the operational development and delivery of the project (the Director of Equal Arts has strategic oversight of the project). The project manager has an established background in grant and project management in relation to the arts and older people, as well as a broad understanding of the voluntary and community and care sectors. The artist facilitators (discussed below) spoke highly of the contribution of the project manager to the project's development and the quality of support received. Here, comments included, *'She's great and I can be really open with her'*, *'I think she is good to have there to witness things and to talk to and she's quite a calming presence'*, *'she's got this sort of reliability and she's never ever flustered'* and *'Michelle does things thoroughly, it's great having her there'*.

Two professional and experienced artist facilitators were also recruited to lead the creative workshops with project participants (volunteers, older people living in residential care and care staff). Equal Arts has a broad network of freelance artists from which to recruit, but selected the two artists who were appointed due to their skills in their respective art forms, their experience of delivering creative workshops and working with older people, and their personal qualities and ethos. Indeed, during Year One, the artists were praised for the quality of their approaches to the project, with comments from project managers being, *'They are both very good and they are both very different in their style'* and *'they are the frontline, if they weren't good, we wouldn't have people that want to do it. Supporting them is incredibly important'*.

Two volunteer groups have been established; one in Gateshead and one in South Shields. One of the artist facilitators explained that when recruiting volunteers, they specifically looked for *'people from within the community who were older volunteers; so anybody really over 50...but people who may have more of an identity with the people who were living in residential care'*. Potential volunteers were sought from sheltered accommodation sites, older people's charities, older people's forums and local community groups such as choirs; through posters in high streets, supermarkets and community venues such as libraries; through other projects delivered by Equal Arts; and, 'word of mouth'. A number of these methods did not result in the recruitment of volunteers, such as promoting the project within an older people's charity and advertising via posters in public spaces. As a result, the recruitment process was described as *'challenging'* and took longer than originally anticipated. Once recruited, volunteers were provided with 'volunteer packs', which included information about the project, a registration form, an expenses claim form and a copy of Equal Arts' most recent annual report. It was also explained that volunteers would need a CRB check. The volunteer packs were symbolic in terms of formalising the role of the volunteers in the project and highlighting the importance of their contribution. It is likely, however, that the targeted recruitment of volunteers will need to be an on-going process as the number of volunteers supporting the project naturally declines over time.

Three care homes were recruited to the project in Year One. The recruitment of care homes was indicated to be ad hoc and time-consuming. Difficulties were linked to Equal Arts not traditionally working in care homes or in South Shields; as one of the project managers explained, *'the networks just weren't there'*. In Year Two, stakeholders acknowledged the need for a more targeted approach to the recruitment of (volunteers and) care homes which includes utilising the support, knowledge and pre-existing relationships of networks such as the Care Alliance (which is now part of the project steering group) and approaching care homes that have attended activity co-ordinator events, for example, delivered by Equal Arts. By virtue of their attendance at the events, the care homes have expressed a commitment to the meaningful use of creative activity with residents and will have an awareness of the ethos and work of Equal Arts prior to engagement with Creativity Matters.

Finally, a project steering group has been established. The steering group will meet quarterly to review project progress and inform its development going forward. The steering group is comprised of the project managers, relevant strategic contacts, artist facilitators, care staff, active older volunteers and the project evaluator.

### ***Aims and Objectives of the Project***

While the stakeholder interviews revealed a common understanding of the project aims amongst core partners (project managers and artist facilitators), stakeholders appeared to emphasise different elements of the project. The strategic and operational project managers were clear that the foci of the project are challenging the culture of care within care homes and empowering care staff to adopt a more person-centred approach to supporting residents. One of the managers stated, *'It was definitely to be seen as care staff development rather than just what's going on with the residents'*, while the other said, *'I see the key aim is to enable care homes to have new ways of enhancing the quality of life of people with dementia through music and dance...and supporting cultural change in care homes to be more person-centred'*. These stakeholders were also clear that the brief given to the artist facilitators focused on two elements, *'supporting cultural change'* and *'involving volunteers'*. They suspected, however, that *'[the artists] get pulled into the minutia, which is really important because it's a weekly session with residents, but really, it's the bigger picture that we need to think about too'*. They went on to say, *'we need to keep reminding ourselves that this is what this is about...I think [the artists] need to know that we need to concentrate on that'*. Indeed, speaking to the artist facilitators suggested their primary focus to be supporting the wellbeing of older people living in residential care. One artist facilitator, for example, said, *'I think, first and foremost, it would be to provide an enjoyable, musical activity for anybody who touches that session. So, in my head when we're together, we're a singing, music making group and it needs to be a nice experience'*. They did go on, however, to discuss the further aim of *'chipping away at the culture in residential settings...that the staff will be left with confidence to lead a musical activity...it's about staff seeing residents differently and about residents enjoying something with staff'*. Moving forward into Year Two, stakeholders agreed, *'...perhaps we need to look at what our aims are for next year and what we would like to work towards...we need to have some pinned down aims in terms of learning points I suppose'*.

### ***The Origins and Training Experiences of the Volunteer Groups***

#### *Grand Gestures*

Grand Gestures is one of the two project volunteer groups established in Year One. The group is based in Gateshead and has been meeting weekly since January 2012. The focus of the group is dance and movement. The group has approximately 12 core members. Grand Gestures started off as a disparate group of individuals, with varying levels of knowledge of Equal Arts and varying levels of friendship between the group members. The volunteers were recruited via various means; some had already taken part in Equal Arts projects, others had personal links with the artist facilitator and others heard about the project through friends. The volunteers primarily came together in the understanding that they were joining a dance and movement group which may be beneficial to their physical and emotional wellbeing. When asked about their initial understanding of what the group would be, comments included: *'I met [the artist] at the town hall and was asked if I wanted to join a dance group'* and *'we thought it was a dance group when we joined'*. The motivations behind joining were linked to the health benefits of exercise and keeping active: *'It was the exercise'*, *'I wasn't really interested in dancing but I suffer from shin splints and I thought it would be good to try some different exercises'* and *'well you've got to do things and be active haven't you'*.

The role of the volunteers in supporting creative activity within care homes was introduced to the group several weeks into the project. The artist facilitator explained that this discussion took place only when they felt the group would be confident enough in their creative abilities to volunteer in care homes. They also anticipated that some of the group would be anxious at the thought of going into care homes, saying *'if you are elder, it wouldn't be your first choice would it'*. Indeed, the volunteers exhibited mixed reactions to this prospect. A number of volunteers were initially reluctant as for them, care homes were associated with painful or upsetting memories. For example: One volunteer said, *'I am reluctant to go in at the moment as I've had three years visiting my mum there, so I need a bit of a gap'*. Others had experienced the loss of a partner or parent who had been living in residential care prior to passing away. The artist facilitator recalled: *'[Robert's]<sup>1</sup> wife had died of dementia related illness and she had to go in a care home'*. Equally, however, approximately half of the group were enthusiastic about the prospect of volunteering.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been provided for all participants referred to in quotes to retain the personal nature of the quotes.

Throughout Year One, Grand Gestures has evolved into a confident performance group, as well as a supportive group of volunteers. The artist facilitator said, *'the Friday group is great...that's become far more than anyone ever thought'*. The group explained that each week, the sessions typically consist of warm up exercises, followed by improvised dancing: *'Every time, there is a warming up so you don't plunge straight into it. There is usually a theme to the warming up...it's the parts of the body that we are going to use later on and special movements that [the artist] encourages you to remember so you can incorporate them into the dances later...so there's structures but its free at the same time'*. The artist emphasised the complexity of the work of the group – *'Everyone thinks improvising is doing anything and what you like, but actually improvisation is the most skilful because you have to be composing in the moment, and composing skilfully, otherwise it looks rubbish'* – as well as the benefits of improvised dance – *'Improv...it gets you over a lot of issues about remembering, but also I think it fine tunes other things like your ability to use your peripheral vision, your ability to respond in the moment and also things like structuring time and space'*. The group placed significant value on the format of the session; the importance of which was confirmed when the group attended the public performance of another dance group of elders in Glasgow. One member of the group explained, *'it was all very regimented, they wore in uniforms, they seemed to have a sequence to follow, they were very rehearsed...we just kept thinking, we are much more spontaneous and that's much more enjoyable'* and another stated, *'we enjoy the freedom'*. The artist described this as a *'great milestone'* for the group. The group has worked in two spaces during Year One; the initial space used for the sessions was not private and proved to be *'disruptive'* to the work of the group. The group stressed the importance of having a dedicated, private working space for the sessions.

During the sessions, the group reported to work flexibly and were evidently supportive of each other's needs. Laughingly, one of the volunteers recalled: *'I as part of the entertainment as I couldn't hear what was happening so I just did whatever'*. Another member of the group has limited mobility due to a degenerative condition. Here the group explained, *'[Geoff] has limited mobility...but he wants to join in and is encouraged to, he is accepted. In the last session, two people went towards [Geoff] to help him so he didn't have to move very far. I think that says a lot about our group'*. Interestingly, the group were asked about their favourite memories from the sessions. All of the group recalled memories relating to the achievements of others or instances of the group supporting other members. One volunteer said, *'I liked our hat week. That was sparked by [William] as he was saying he felt conscious of his hair so the next week, we said we would bring in a hat. We then shared the hats and behaved the way they made us feel'*. Another said, *'there was a duet one day between [Richard] and [Brian]...it was fantastic, I have never seen anything like it'*. The supportiveness and inclusiveness of the group were further evidenced by the comment of another volunteer who had observed, *'it's interesting that almost everyone who visits joins in which shows how sort of inclusive this is...in other groups, that probably doesn't happen. I think that says a lot about us'*. This is an admirable quality of the group and is of critical importance to their wider role within the project. Supporting these comments, the artistic facilitator highlighted that the group has developed a strong sense of collective identity: *'They are very much a group. They have a very strong sense that they are Grand Gestures'*.

The key focus of the sessions is developing the group's creative skills in relation to dance/movement and their confidence in their creative abilities, in order for them to be able to share these skills with staff in care homes. Indeed, a number of the group reported to be *'amazed'* at their creative achievements since the project began, which includes the development of two short performance pieces, as well as their confidence to be creative. One volunteer said, *'I never thought I'd have the confidence to get up to dance by myself with other people watching'*. Another volunteer who had not danced for many years said, *'This was something I used to do but it was something I felt I was too stiff to do so it was nice to be encouraged back into it'*. Another said, *'[the artist] leads you to have your own ideas...the way she teaches us, she encourages us to think creatively'*. The confidence of the group was further evidenced by the continued meeting of the group during an unexpected period of absence of the artist facilitator. They explained, *'we tried to follow the same format as [the artist] each week and we made up a dance. We called it 'Colour''*. During Year One, the group also completed a public performance and recalled that this *'felt very special'* and were filmed doing an improvised performance which was shown at a music festival at the Sage in December 2012. The group reported that this made them feel *'quite important'*. The group aims to do further public performances in Year Two, suggesting that the challenge of doing a public performance is important as *'it gives [us] motivation to get a bit better'*. They are also happy to welcome new members to the group in Year Two.

Participation in the project is also reported to have sparked other aspects of the volunteers' creativity. Since participating in the project, for example, one volunteer has returned to creative writing and painting: *'There was one week that [the artist] asked us to close our eyes and think of something which made us frightened, something we would like to and an ambition. I found that this sparked things off in me...I went home and started writing...I also found myself picking up a paintbrush and just went with the flow of the movements that we had been doing'*. Another volunteer has completed a number of paintings based on photographs taken during the sessions or simply from memory. This volunteer came up with



the idea of 'Grand Gestures' as the name of the group and produced artwork for the group's online blog. The artist explained, *'he'd put a strapline on something like Grand Gestures for those who liked to moved and as soon as we saw it, we all just thought 'Ah we'll have it'. This was felt to have had a 'huge impact' on the volunteer's confidence. Talking of [William's] work, the group said 'it's been encouraged, supported, acknowledged here'. William agreed, 'it gives you more confidence when people like your things'. Furthermore, when asked about their favourite memories of the group, one of the volunteers said, 'I have a good memory...it was the first day [William] got up by himself'. Here William explained, 'it was something [the artist] said, it triggered something off in me and I was in the zone'. Another volunteer then said, 'We were all really delighted and very moved by it'. The artist also recalled, 'the first few weeks he was joining the group warm ups, but whenever we went into personal responses or duets, you couldn't get him to move'.*

In addition to developing the creative skills of the group, the artist facilitator wanted the sessions to support the emotional and physical wellbeing of the volunteers by providing them with an opportunity to *'tap into parts of [their] whole personality'* and to provide *'a place to reflect upon life experiences and to express themselves'*. Indeed, the group praised the ability of the artist to *'bring people out of themselves'* and agreed that the sessions had provided them with a means of self-expression. The artist facilitator recalled that one member of the group had explained to her, *'he has all these feelings and he can express them in movement in a way he can't with words...they're dealt with in another way that's not about sitting in a therapy session or having to tell everyone his personal stuff'*. The artist felt that the group is *'really helping him in the rest of his life, because he's getting confident, he's expressing himself, he's developed flexibility in his mind to think in a different way'*. The artist had also observed the sessions having a profound effect on the self-confidence of another member of the group: *'[Jane] is incredible. She's come out in the fact she talks more, giggles more...she was so, so shy and didn't say anything and now she'll laugh. She always offers things, her humour, she's very cheeky. And she's a great story teller'*. Linked to this, several members of the group suggested that taking part in the sessions had brought back old memories. For example, one volunteer recalled how the games played took her back to memories of childhood: *'when we were throwing the ball, it took you back to school days and playing games'*, while another volunteer who studied performance arts and had a history of theatre work said, *'it reminded me very much of what we did when I first went to college...it's what we used to do at the start of drama class'*.

Casting their minds back to when they first began meeting, the group recalled lots of *'nervous laughter'*. Members of the group commented, *'we laughed at what we were doing to start off with as it seemed so different and silly at times'* and *'we were self-conscious so we tended to laugh'*. They reported that since then, however, the group has come to laugh with enjoyment: *'we have got to a point where we don't really care what we look like as we enjoy it so much...we just think about what we are doing rather than the activity itself'*. Indeed, all of the participants signalled their enjoyment of the sessions, with comments including: *'we just enjoy ourselves'* and *'it always makes you laugh'*. Here, the artist facilitator said, *'I think laughing is incredibly important...and you know we've got jokes now and I think there's a lot to be said for banter, because that's what happens in family isn't it? And coffee and tea time...I always stand out and watch them and they're just sharing news, asking how they are, catching up. I think that is a huge part of wellbeing'*. The group reported the sessions to be very sociable events and talked of the quality of the friendships which they had made: *'it's a very social occasion this', 'I love the company', 'we've all become friends', 'you don't know if you are going to join together as a group but I think we've all gelled together really well'*. The group also reported spending lots of time together outside of the sessions: *'we were all strangers when we first started but we went to a concert together at the town hall, so we do things now outside of the classes', 'If it wasn't for coming here, there would be a tremendous gap in my life. It's absolutely wonderful...you meet all these lovely people...we've got an invite to [Laura's] next week and that's just one example', 'when you get into a group, it gets you into all sorts of activities'*. Similarly, stakeholders reflecting on their observations of Grand Gestures also discussed the strong friendships which had developed, saying, for example, *'you've got people from different backgrounds, different life experiences and then through this common thing that they want to do, you've got these incredible relationships and friendships. I just think that's quite amazing'* and *'they do a lot of things outside of the group, culturally. Like [Nora's] been off to see some dance that she said she normally wouldn't have gone but she thought she would take a risk, and she came back and reported to the group, and then they had this great discussion all about aesthetics of dance and technical dance'*.

Finally, the group indicated that taking part in the weekly dance sessions had been of significant benefit to their health. The artist facilitator suggested that the group have a greater awareness of the importance of physical wellbeing as a result of participation: *'I think they've got a greater sense of the structure of their anatomy, not from a technical point of view...just basically a bit more knowledge about how you're structured and how you can maximise your functionality'*. The artist explained that each week, she would take a passage from a medical source about the benefits of dance or a quote from a dancer about the benefits of dance to the session and that this had sparked a lot of discussion among the group about the importance of being active and looking after the bodies. The group and artist

facilitator also talked about the increased mobility and fitness of the group over time. They observed, *'they've definitely got more stamina...thinking back, they would never, ever have been able to stand and keep going like that ...and they moving the whole time. I would think the heart and lung function would have improved'*. Indeed, on a number of occasions, members of the group reported, *'I've had a really good workout today'*. There was also discussion among the group of overcoming their normal physical limitations when taking part in the sessions. For example, when talking about one volunteer with a degenerative neurological condition, the artist facilitator stated, *'[his condition] has got worse because of his drug treatment, but if you watch him when he gets up, the urge to dance...his urge to socialise...it just seemed to override the disease...the second week he came, he was fairly frail and he did this Irish sort of jig...he was jumping and I remember him saying to me, 'I don't know how I've done that, I couldn't get out of bed this morning'*. Another of the volunteers also said, *'I used to do yoga but this is much better. I can't do all the moves that I used to be able to do. This is much gentler on my body but it still stretches everything that I need to'*. One member of the group also suggested that taking part in the movements provides positive mental stimulation, saying: *'It's very challenging doing one thing with your legs and one thing with your arms at our age...it's very good for you'*.

### *The Ukulele Group*

The second group of volunteers are based in South Shields and meet weekly to learn to play the ukulele and develop their choir skills. The group has approximately 10 core members. The majority of volunteers were recruited through a local older people's forum. Prior to taking part in the project, they had strong friendships and a long history of volunteering and taking part in creative activity. Other members of the group were recruited from sheltered accommodation, two volunteers were recruited from a local choir and one volunteer was the relative of a resident in one of the participating care homes.

All of the volunteers understood from the outset that the overarching focus of their participation in the project was to support residential care staff to develop their creative skills and to support the residents to engage in creative activity. Here, one stakeholder explained: *'We didn't want to mislead anyone into thinking that this was just a session that they could come along to...we wanted to get the right kind of people that would want to get involved in something else'*. The artist facilitator confirmed: *'It was very clear, they were very clear'*. Talking about two volunteers in particular, the artist facilitator said: *'both of them were very well educated, just-retired professional women, who were quite formidable, really lovely, absolutely lovely but very clear about what we were doing. There was just absolutely no confusion in their heads'*.

This group of volunteers was described as comfortable with the prospect of supporting creative activity in care homes. Several of the volunteers had experience of visiting care homes so *'they knew what to expect'*. A number of volunteers also reported that because they didn't have an emotional connection to the care homes they were going to support, this made the prospect of volunteering less daunting. The artist facilitator explained: *'So if they were like going in to see their mum in a residential home it was quite hard sometimes. Like on the heart it was really difficult but because they were coming in not knowing the residents, it actually, because they were a little bit worried at first but they was saying actually like we've got no massive emotional investment. That didn't mean they didn't care but it was about not having that relationship'*.

Nearly all of the volunteers were familiar with the ukulele or guitar, or had experience of singing in a choir, so the first cohort of weekly sessions focused on finessing the group's ukulele skills and developing a repertoire of songs which they could play with the care staff and residents: *'what was nice was to have the repertoire days and the fact that when they came in, I wasn't looking at a workshop. So they weren't coming as learners, they were coming as people wanting to get the skills they needed in order to do a task'*. For some volunteers, the most challenging aspect of the sessions was thought to be developing the confidence required to play the ukulele to an audience. The artist facilitator explained: *'One of the volunteers was nervous about her playing and that actually, for about three or four sessions, she needed to get, she needed to overcome the fact that people could hear her playing...she was quite sort of 'oh my God, what if I hit the wrong cord?...with the two volunteers who were very, you know, very professional, very highly trained, very assertive women, their biggest fear was being heard to play, being heard to sing, but they were more comfortable with singing because they sang in a choir'*.

During Year One, the group has been meeting in the sheltered accommodation site at which some of the volunteers are residents. It has been agreed, however, that they will meet in a local church hall in Year Two. The relocation is symbolic; reinforcing the message to the volunteers who are resident in the sheltered accommodation site that they are taking part in a training programme, rather than a project focused around their entertainment. The artist explained that residents living in the sheltered accommodation site already support activity in a neighbouring residential care home, *'so the concept was really good...but what's been quite hard and what's been really, like*

*just really difficult is although they do that, it's been a really weird process getting them to actually think that they're the people who are going to be doing the doing rather than being done to'. Accordingly, it was hoped that the shift of location would help to shift thinking about the purpose of the sessions.*

Similar to Grand Gestures, the ukulele group was described by stakeholders as 'a *very strong group*' who are 'very *supportive of each other*' and are committed to developing their music skills. The artist facilitator said, '*they really want to learn...when we've talk in the sessions, they're like sponges and they're really wanting to do the best they can do*'. Project stakeholders reported to be confident that the group will be instrumental in supporting the project aims going forward.

### ***Engagement with the Care Homes***

The project has engaged with three care homes in Year One; two in South Shields, focused around music and singing, and one in Gateshead, focused around dance and movement. All three care homes engaged with are classed as residential care homes – all of the residents are under 24 hour care and many suffer from dementia. Engagement with the care homes consisted of two-hour, weekly sessions which took place over a ten-week period. It was originally anticipated that each artist facilitator and volunteer group would engage with three care homes per year, but this was not possible in Year One as time needed to be afforded to the recruitment of volunteers and care homes and the establishing of project processes. The artist facilitators also felt it important for the volunteers to develop their own identity as a group, as well as their creative skills and confidence before going into the care homes. It is envisaged that the shortfall will be made up in Year Two.

The focus of engagement with the care homes was the transference of the artist and volunteers' creative and facilitation skills to care staff, in order to provide them with tools to support the adoption of a more person-centred approach to the care of older people. A further aim was providing the residents with an enjoyable experience to enhance their quality of life and wellbeing.

Responsibility for oversight of the project within the homes was typically delegated to an activities coordinator. In two care homes, the sessions were also supported by carers and in another home, the sessions were supported by a further activities coordinator and an administrator.

One of the care homes was used as a case study in Year One. In this home, the staff interviewed reported that it was clear from the outset that the project had a workforce development focus. The home wanted to be involved in the project as the residents '*really enjoy*' music-based activities and music is more accessible for the residents than other types of activity: '*I think it's something you can do even if you are frail*', '*With the dementia, they really enjoy it more...they can't often remember what they have said, but they remember every word of the songs. When you start singing songs, they pick it up straight away*', '*I think it's easier for them to join in, even if they just want to sit and listen, they can just enjoy the music*'. One member of staff also suggested that music can trigger their recollection of memories: '*I think if they have known the song in the past and they hear it, I think it might trigger something off for them...memories*'. The staff also suggested that the training element of the project would support the sustainability of music-based activities within the care home, in a context of limited resources: '*we do get professional entertainers in...but you are paying for those. The price has gone up a lot in the past year or two...now you are looking probably 80 or 90 pounds for an hour. It's expensive and we have to raise that money*'.

All three numbers of staff who took part in the sessions expressed a personal interest in learning to play the ukulele. One of the activities co-ordinators explained that he had attempted to learn to play the ukulele in the past but was unable to progress without formal tuition. Another saw learning to play the ukulele as a personal challenge – '*It's was something for myself as well, to say I could achieve something...I have never played an instrument in my life so I thought 'go on, I'll have a go*' – but were nervous at the prospect – '*I was quite nervous at first...at my age, to take something new on like that. Music has never made any sense to me, I've never tried to learn it, but it was good*'. The staff were grateful that ukuleles were provided by Equal Arts for the sessions and that they were able to keep them during the ten week programme so that they could practice in their spare time. Interestingly, none of the carers at the home took part in the project. All three interviewees reported that it would be difficult for the carers to be 'freed up' from their duties each week in order to take part: '*It's who you can free up on the day. I think it's easier for the carers to join in with the singing as they can look after the residents at the same time but for them to sit down and concentrate on a lesson would be very difficult as they have a job to do looking after the residents*'; '*the three of us are in positions where we generally can come off the floor...the carers would have to do it in their own time or at the end of their shifts and they have different shift patterns...I don't know how we could get*

*around that*. It was also suggested that some of the care staff may have been nervous at the prospect of taking part: *'At the beginning when something is new like that, everyone is a bit scared and think I'm not going to volunteer, but some of the staff have watched us and I think now they would like to do it, when they have seen us, seen its not scary'*. Supporting this, one of the artist facilitators commented that perceptions about the level of skill required to engage in creative activity is a key barrier to projects of this nature. It is important to note here that none of the staff who took part in the project from this care home had a background in creative activity, nor did they have knowledge of the benefits of creativity for older people. They indicated that Creativity Matters was the first opportunity they had had to engage in a training programme of this nature since being in post.

Moving on to consider the delivery of the sessions within the care homes, both artist facilitators reported to have completed informal training with their volunteer groups regarding the aims and structure of the sessions and to have discussed any concerns which they had about volunteering. In one home, the volunteers also met with the care staff prior to the commencement of the ten-week programme. During the meeting, the artist facilitator, volunteers and staff introduced themselves to one another, discussed how the project would work and the volunteers showed the staff some of the performances that they had been developing. The artist facilitator said, *'the session with all the staff that was brilliant because they met all the staff and you know, the staff provided them with cups of coffee and tea and a biscuit, so they were like, 'Isn't this great!'. And we had a look around the centre and they liked that, so that was good, that kind of, they knew where they were going, they knew where they would be, so they liked all of that'*. They suggested that this should become a standard part of the project induction process for care homes. There was no cap on the number of residents that could take part in the sessions each week. It was reported that they were largely delivered simply to those who were present in the lounge being used for the session in the care homes each week. The format of the sessions in each care home varied across the project. When talking about the format of the sessions in one care home in Gateshead, Grand Gestures explained that they typically followed a similar format to the training sessions completed by the group each week: *'we sang and danced...we had a group of people in the home and we sat between them...we did ball passing and the things that we do here. It was getting them to follow movements and getting their brains and bodies to work'*. Here, staff joined in with the sessions, the same as the residents. The music and singing sessions delivered by the artist facilitator and volunteers in two care homes in South Shields, however, were reported to follow a more formal 'training' structure, with the first part of the sessions being dedicated to staff training and the second part of the sessions being dedicated to providing the residents with an enjoyable experience.

### **Outcomes and Impacts**

The effectiveness of the project delivery model was evidenced by the wide-ranging outcomes and impacts of the project.

#### *Residents*

All care staff, volunteers and residents interviewed spoke of the residents' enjoyment of the sessions. Comments included: *'The residents love the music and the singing', 'I think it just helps them to enjoy the time that they have got in here...it brightens up their day really...you can see they just light up as soon as they sing', 'they all enjoyed it and joined in', 'I've just had a nice time', 'Very nice, very enjoyable', 'Thank you so much, it was lovely, I was wondering if you could come again' and 'Every week is a pleasure'*. Linked to this, a number of volunteers observed increased levels of smiling and laughter among the residents as a result of the sessions: *'I notice how olive smiles when there is singing', 'oh, when she smiled...what a difference', 'They are getting a lot jollier, a lot brighter, I think it's making a difference'*. Indeed, when expressing their appreciation of the sessions, one resident said: *'what is life with miserable people...I like to laugh'*. It was also observed that energy levels seemed to increase during the sessions. Indeed, one of the intended outcomes of the sessions was described by one stakeholder as *'swapping the energy from the volunteers to the residents'*. One of the project managers observed, *'You go in, everyone is having a snooze or everyone's sort of like...either they're watching the telly or they're not but they just put it on anyway and within then minutes, they are singing, instruments, up to dance...they're alert'*. Similarly, one of the artist facilitators recalled: *'Last week, there was a lady who was asleep and as we started to sing she was singing while she had sort of got her eyes shut...then she was actually moving her mouth and then she got a shaker and she started singing along to it'*, while one of the volunteers observed: *'One of them seemed to be sleeping, but her foot was tapping'*. The residents themselves also suggested that they felt more energised as a result of participation: *'I am feeling young again instead of old'*. Project stakeholders also suggested that the sessions had impacted positively on the residents' 'mood'. One of the volunteers recalled that *'Olive's mood changed to a positive mood'* during a session, while one of the project managers said, *'I think one of the ones that stands out for me...there was a lady who when she came in she was quite aggressive and I got the impression she was not*

wanting to talk to anyone or have anyone touch her or...But at the end of the session, we all said goodbye and she smiled at me. I think maybe the staff shouldn't have put her right in the middle next to people, but when they'd moved her so she wasn't being sort of bothered - obviously her personal space was the issue - she definitely came out of herself'. Finally, one of the residents said, 'This lasts me to the middle of next week'. Enjoyment of the sessions was also felt to be evidenced by high levels of participation in the sessions. A typical comment here was: 'Well I have noticed a couple of residents, that like I say, wouldn't normally join in, have joined in so I think it's been good for them'.

Despite many of the residents suffering from dementia, staff reported a sense of anticipation for the sessions among the residents. One of the staff said, for example, 'I think they all look forward to it', while volunteers recalled residents saying 'I remember you lot, oh absolutely lovely' and 'Last night, I was lying in bed going la la la la la and I was thinking 'I love this', I love it when you come' and one of the artist facilitators said, 'the residents would be there once they knew what it was and they were excited by it. And that was amazing, because what you had was anticipation of the people with advanced dementia...like [Sally] said, 'Oh I was so excited last night because I knew you would be coming today''. A further example of participation in the sessions supporting residents to overcome their conditions was observed by another volunteer who remarked, 'it was great to see [Barbara] the dancer get up...the minute we started singing, she was singing, the minute the music stopped, she was back to her mam and dad...it brought her out of her dementia for a moment'.

Stakeholders also commented on the quality of the relationships that had developed between the residents and volunteers. One of the artist facilitators said, for example, '[Sally] always, always recognised [Jane]. Her and [Jane] had this great bond and [Jane] had bought these little glass beads, because she likes a bit of bling and [Sally] would hold her beads and look at [Jane]'. The staff also suggested that the sessions had provided the residents with a new topic of conversation and brought a new element of sociability to the home. For example, one member of staff said, 'I think when they see people coming in with the ukulele, they think ooh here they go again, it gives them something to talk about'. Supporting this, one of the volunteers said, 'it brings out stories that they've got to tell...people's experiences are coming out...a lady was talking about her dad and how he played the ukulele and he played George Formby'.

Finally, there was a sense that the creative abilities and confidence of the residents to engage in creative activity had increased; this was evidenced by higher levels of participation in the sessions as the programme went on – 'some of the residents say they don't want to do it at first but then when they see it happening, they join in or want to go along and they ask when it's on again...it's just about confidence at first really' – and the quality of the output of the sessions – 'the group very, very quickly became a quality singing group because the residents would sing the tune and we would have two men doing a bit of harmony and making it sound like we'd been practising forever'. The artist facilitators also suggested that the sessions were empowering for the residents. Indeed, one of the residents said, 'We should have more of this, the older people are better than the young' and one of the artists agreed, 'within the group quite often some of the residents are far better musicians vocally than the care staff. That balance is nowhere else, you know'. One artist facilitator recalled another instance where participation in the sessions had impacted positively on a resident; giving them a sense of identity which was not linked to their health or personal limitations. She explained: 'there was a lady, about session four, it was her very first day in the care home and she was just diagnosed with dementia, she was so upset. She was anxious and I was a little bit concerned about whether there'd be too much stimulus but the minute we started singing, she just relaxed and stayed relaxed throughout the session. She ended up singing a solo and it was beautiful - it made people cry - it was a sad song, really sad song - and she sang it beautifully and it tapped into her as a singer and you know, skilled. Kathy said it just helped the rest of that evening because people were able to say to her "you were singing a lovely song" and, you know, "We're going to do some singing" and "you were a singer" and, so it was about her as a singer'.

#### Volunteers

Volunteers reported to find the process of supporting creative activity in the care homes to be a positive experience. Commenting on the volunteers initial experiences, one stakeholder said: 'I think [Rob] is an interesting case because he was very reluctant, well he was very anxious before we went in and he said, 'I'm not sure how I'm going to react' but after the first session, he said he really found it helpful because it took away the memory of care homes being bad places', while one of the artist facilitators stated, '...[Rob] loves coming in to help; [Tim's] the same. [Nora] wasn't keen, but loved it. And [Jane] lights up the place...I think they get a lot of joy out of what they do'. Reflecting on their own experiences, the volunteers talked at length about the sense of enjoyment derived from supporting the sessions. Here, comments included: 'I really enjoyed the session', 'so much fun', 'what a pleasant afternoon I had', 'it's very sociable', 'we are all having a marvellous time' and 'we enjoyed it, we are all good singers'. They also spoke of the sense of satisfaction and achievement gained from supporting the sessions. One of the volunteers said 'you feel as though you are doing something for the people in the home',

while another said, *'I think we have done them a world of good'* and another stated, *'what we are doing now is worthwhile'*. Similarly, the artists agreed that the volunteers were *'really getting something out of it'*. They felt that supporting the older residents had *'made [the volunteers] aware that actually what they've got is really good. So I think it's sort of like topped up their wellbeing feeling'*. They went on to say, *'I think they've started to think a little bit more about people who are living in residential care...people who actually are of their generation but who are living in very different circumstances. And again that impacts on how they're really appreciating what they do and I think they feel like they've achieved something'*. Indeed, one of the volunteers said, *'there are people there that are the same age as us and sometimes younger and it makes us think how lucky we are...and we find it very rewarding to make people smile and feel happy for a while'*. The artists also suggested that the volunteers' confidence to support the residents during the sessions had increased over time: *'I think they developed more confidence. They've learned how to support different people'*. Overall, the volunteer groups suggested *'it is an excellent volunteering opportunity'* and they look forward to supporting further creative activity in care homes as the project continues.

All project stakeholders were praising of the support provided to residents by the volunteers during the sessions. Specifically, care staff reported that the presence of the volunteers at the sessions was *'new faces for them....someone else to talk to'* and that the conversation they offered was *'a breath of fresh air'* for the residents, while one of the volunteers commented on the value that residents placed on the physical support offered to them by the volunteers, saying, for example, *'I noticed what a difference it made to [Jennifer] when [Laura] helped her put her feet on the ground'*. The care staff also reported to have valued the additional support of the volunteers during the sessions in caring for the residents. In one of the care homes where the lead activities coordinator reported that they do not have the support of care staff when running activities with the residents, they said, *'I think there have been about four volunteers. I think it has made things easier as they have come in and helped with the residents...got up and danced with residents, sat by them with the song books and sang with them..'* Another member of staff said, *'The volunteers expand our group which makes it easier for us'*. One of the artist facilitators also perceived that the staff appreciated the support of the volunteers, stating: *'I think they genuinely appreciated having us there. They were very welcoming...definitely friendships grew...and when we left they did like a party tea and you know Grand Gestures were made-up about that...they felt special. I think they developed relationships with the other staff because we did, we had the three same staff mainly'*. The support provided by volunteers was also highly valued by the artist facilitators. One project stakeholder observed: *'In the care home situation, it's alleviated that the volunteers were there because it takes the pressure off'*, while one of the artist facilitators agreed, *'I would say they're really great to have. It's another pair of hands when you're working with the props as well, and you're trying to talk to each person and look after...Keep the room energised, keep everything going and then just being able to feedback'*.

### *Staff*

Reflecting the thoughts of volunteers, care staff also reported to have found participation in the project to be a positive experience. Those that had learned to play the ukulele, in particular, reported gaining a sense of achievement from developing their creative skills – *'in terms of what we've learned, it's been brilliant'*, *'I think it's been really interesting to learn something new...I'm still obviously learning, but it's coming along well'*, *'getting that bit further with the ukulele...I think I understand a bit more how it works. That's what it's done for me'*. One staff member also reported a new found respect and appreciation for individuals with a talent such as playing an instrument: *'I look at people who are playing a guitar now and I think, 'Oh, they must have spent hours trying to pick that up'*, while another said, *'I'm enjoying it, it's something new, it does try to stretch your horizons'*.

Commenting on the impacts of the project on a member of staff from one care home, an artist facilitator reported to have seen a *'big change'* in terms of their self-confidence, their enthusiasm for their job and the quality of their interaction with the residents. She explained: *'When I first met [John]...he's quite a shy person. It felt like he was completely disengaged with his job. The first couple of sessions, I thought he's in the wrong job but I see him being much more confident now and interacting more with the residents...there is a bit of banter between him and the residents so...when I first met him he sat in the corner, he had the book right in front of his face and he was on the lowest chair possible so nobody could see him. Now the fact he was standing singing...really loudly was great'*. The artist also observed that this member of staff had increased not only his ukulele skills but also his facilitation skills and had started assuming a formal role within the sessions towards the end of the ten-week programme: *'Even like giving him a role within the session, I was looking at him thinking 'oh [John], that's perfect'*. The artist finally went on to say that this member of staff had a lot of *'untapped potential'*, saying, *'He just needs nurturing. He's had no experience, he's young'*; hence, it would have been unreasonable to expect him to assume ownership of the programme within ten weeks. This example highlights the importance of measuring the *'distance travelled'* of project participants rather than looking solely at the final outcomes and impacts of the project in

isolation. Overall, the artist facilitator was confident that participation in the project will have provided staff in this care home with *'the opportunity just to think a little bit more about their role and about what they can achieve and looking in the sessions, 'does somebody need a bit of support? Has somebody enjoyed it?'*

In another of the care homes, two care staff were reported to have consistently attended the sessions. Not only was it reported that they enjoyed the sessions, but also that the sessions had helped to *'demystify'* the skills needed to engage in creative activity: *'to show them how easy it is to get movement, because they'd say 'Oh I can't dance' and I'd say 'Well you can if you just take a moment to just experience it'. And half the time they didn't realise they were moving, because you're taking the attention somewhere else, like it's a game with a ball, or 'oh could you just pick that up', or just working a lot with simple props...and all it costs you really is maybe a bit of your time, planning and maybe a bit of thinking about arranging a room in a way to make people feel like they're part of a group and turning the telly off'*. It was reported that the staff felt *'less intimidated'* by the idea of engaging in creative activity as a result of the project. These staff also informed the artist facilitator that they had used some of the skills and exercises learned through the programme with the residents independently.

Thinking about the impact of the project on the quality of care provided to residents, it was suggested by all project stakeholders that the project will have enhanced relationships between participating staff and residents, as staff came to learn more about the residents' life experiences and competencies; this will, in turn, support them to adopt a more person-centred approach to the residents' care. One volunteer discussed her memories of one lady who had not taken part in any of the activities ran by the home following a period in hospital - until the delivery of Creativity Matters and how moved the care staff were by this: *'the thing that struck me...there was a lady there...she went into the home as an active person and had been in hospital. From coming out of hospital, she hadn't done anything at all. She seemed to have lost all movement and wasn't engaging with people. She sat with the group and began to move. The carer was almost in tears to see that this had got through to her'*. Another volunteer recalled the instance when a resident revealed her powerful singing voice which staff were unaware of: *'someone said to her 'Irish eyes, yours, aren't they Mary', she repeated it but hardly spoken and then she started playing it and all of a sudden, this booming voice came out this little woman with a great big, powerful voice that nobody knew of'*. Another volunteer recalled care staff being moved by another resident's participation in the sessions and her recognition of the volunteers when they arrived to deliver the sessions despite suffering from dementia: *'The care workers were very emotional at Audrey's participation and the fact that Audrey recognised us'*. Another volunteer recalled an instance where *'[Jennifer] sang 'in apple blossom time' as a solo and the staff were stunned and all cried as she had never done that before'*. They described this as a *'wonderful moment'*. Talking of another resident, one of the artist facilitators said, *'she always looked so posh and didn't speak much, but then by the time we got to week eight, out of the blue, this lady sang a song from start to finish and all the care staff cried because they didn't know she could sing or that she'd remember a song. So there's loads of things going on about that being a personal milestones, but they never documented'*. The second artist facilitator also recalled a *'turning point'* when another resident who was perceived to have limited cognitive awareness started responding to the music: *'One resident in particular had quite a significant physical disability. After about three or four sessions, I was thinking 'that's not random movements' and I asked somebody to watch and it wasn't. She was very choosy on which songs but she conducted and then occasionally she would just make the perfect vowel sound in time and virtually in pitch, so it wasn't that she was just making a noise...there was intent. I think for the staff to be able to see that she was really getting something out of it and taking part, that was the turning point for one or two staff'*. Another project stakeholder recalled how *'brilliantly'* one of the residents played a harmonica that he was provided with and following this, staff stated, *'in all the years I've been here, I've never heard him play'*. One member of staff stated that learning to play the ukulele had provided them with a new topic of conversation with the residents: *'I think it's been beneficial as I think they are all interested to see how we are progressing'*.

Positively, one activities coordinator who took part in the project has become a member of the project steering group, while a second indicated that he would like to continue to be involved in the project in the future by attending sharing events, for example. He said, *'Probably yes aye, sharing ideas with different activity coordinators is probably a good thing. It's all down to me for planning activities. I used to be able to talk to other coordinators...the company used to bring them together once a month - which was quite useful - but that doesn't happen anymore since the home has been taken over by another company'*.

In the care homes, however, it was evident that a wider programme of training would need to be undertaken around the meaningful use of creative activity in supporting the residents' wellbeing if positive, sustainable changes were to be achieved. For example, in one care home, the activities coordinator was said to have *'very enthusiastically'* supported the sessions. This particular member of staff had completed some training on the social benefits of the arts for older people and reported *'I think singing is better than any medication'*. They also reported to

have implemented a number of changes within their care home to integrate meaningful engagement with the arts into everyday practices, such as playing music to the residents at set times each day, rather than switching on the television in the communal lounge. The hope was that the music would help stimulate dialogue between carers and residents. They stated: *‘Music has the biggest impact on the staff as it means they have to engage with the residents...it’s too easy for them to leave them to sit and watch telly’*. Another member of staff at this home was also reported to have enthusiastically supported the sessions. The artist facilitator reported, *‘I’m sure the residents benefited after because she was on such a high when she left the session that she probably sailed through the next two or three hours’*. Nonetheless, it was felt that this home lacked understanding of the different ways in which creativity can support wellbeing – beyond being a means of entertainment – and the ways in which the arts can be used to produce meaningful interaction between staff and residents. As one stakeholder put it, *‘she tends to think that she is the entertainment as opposed to seeing what somebody is about and it being about them as well...it’s about the big performance, get out the big band and all that kind of stuff’*. Similarly, the artist facilitator commented on the need for further work with this care home to enable staff to further understand the role that the arts can play in enabling residents to express themselves. They explained: *‘Last Wednesday there was this woman, this member of staff said to her, “Come on, you’re not loud enough”, and it was all that in your face business. So I suppose what I would like to see over is for her to stop being so loud and it’s got to be a performance, to actually just allowing them to just do what they want to do, you know’*. These findings were of limited surprise to the strategic project manager who was aware that *‘there’s lots of research now that music’s really good around people with dementia, the problem is you now go into a home and there’s really loud music, it’s a bit of a one thing covers all and that’s not what we’re about. It’s about making it personal to residents – songs they like, linking songs to memories they have’*. One of the artist facilitators agreed, *‘a lot of places want to jolly residents up and occasionally I’d be told ‘don’t sing that, it might make people cry’. Well it might but that’s not a bad thing. It could be a happy memory which provokes tears. People need a chance to express themselves. And actually not having the opportunity to can be more damaging, because then it manifests in other ways and people become ill or people become agitated or become aggressive’*.

A further issue which emerged during the evaluation process was that staff in one care home found the ‘excitedness’ of the residents during the sessions to be ‘challenging’. Indeed, the project managers developed a sense that *‘they are perceiving us as livening the residents up, where in actual fact, it’s easier for them to give them a cup of tea and leave them there...they perceive it as causing a bit of work...we turn up and they have to do more...they have to get chairs, organise a drink’*. Another stakeholder said, *‘I never thought before that having an active older person in a care home would be an issue, it hadn’t entered my mind that they saw that as a challenge. Because to me you want them to be human beings, you want them to be alive surely you know in themselves because that’s what we do pretty much, see them come alive’*. One of the artist facilitators also stated: *‘they did say that because people became alive and animated they were naturally being more demanding. It was just like suddenly people were aware and alive and asking and interacting and of course noise levels went up, energy went up. Suddenly you have a room with ten or twelve people in it who are like going, ‘Woohoo, I’m here!’ And it was a huge challenge and I think that’s what you’re always going to be up against’*. Indeed, this suggests the need for a cultural shift within care homes which embraces active older residents.

Project stakeholders also suspected that the impact of the project on the culture of care within the homes among the wider network of staff would be limited, suggesting that the care staff within the homes that did not participate in the project were likely to have perceived it as a form of entertainment rather than activity which could be instrumental in supporting the wellbeing of the residents. One stakeholder said, *‘I just get the feeling that some see it as ten weeks of entertainment’*, while one of the artist facilitators said, *‘I think some of them perceive it as ‘oh they’re just going off in there for an hour for a jolly’*. Stakeholders suggested that staff who are not taking part in the project may see those who are as ‘not working’, *‘because work is seen as being very task driven, like reading and taking people to the toilet...if you are having a laugh with someone and doing some music that might be seen as ‘oh, they’re not really working. It’s a worry because it’s got to be seen as work, as valuable...and that’s got to come from the manager I think’*. Stakeholders stressed the need for staff to understand this project to be different from other activities that take place in care homes – *‘they already do sing-alongs and they do exercises with the residents and this is a project at another level really and it’s about making sure they understand. I’m not sure how much they value this compared to having a sing-along’* – with the key difference being the quality of engagement (and therefore, impact) which Creativity Matters promotes.

A further potential barrier to the impact of the project in relation to the culture of care within care homes is the potentially limited capacity of staff to reflect upon their experience of participating in the project and the benefits of the project for residents. On multiple occasions, project stakeholders observed that care staff would fail to notice significant changes among the residents both within the sessions and across the ten-week programme. Recalling one such instance, an artist facilitator said, *‘Now I think that’s huge, but none of the care workers... I was looking*



going, "That..." if you've got your dementia champion, should be noted, because [Sally] is remembering an event and time, and anticipating'. Furthermore, during the evaluation process, there was a significant difference between the quality of observations made by artist facilitators and volunteers compared to care staff regarding the impacts of the sessions. One of the artist facilitators supporting this, saying, 'what Grand Gestures were noticing compared to what the care staff had said...I don't know how skilled they are...I've done a lot of work about how to lead a session and observe and I'm always stunned at the lack of analytical skills of carers'. They went on to say, 'because we were so good at doing what we did, and Grand Gestures and so, so lovely with the residents, and so many wonderful rich things were happening, I do think there was an element of, "Oh this is great, there's a lot going on", but they didn't see it as, well what is it, there's no reflection'. The artist facilitators also did not feel that staff reflecting upon the impact of the project on their skills: 'I don't think they were reflecting on the quality of their professional practice and thinking 'here's an opportunity for me to learn how I can make life for my people I'm charged to look after, better' and I think that's the key to it'. There was discussion among stakeholders about a 'clash of cultures' brought about by the project; as one stakeholder explained, 'Its two totally different cultures. It's the very hierarchical, very task driven and then the kind of emotional language and empathetic way of working...it's how we build those bridge', while another said, 'I think care staff feel very disempowered'. One of the activities coordinators substantiated this, saying, 'the care staff don't have a lot of time to spend with the residents...a lot of their time is taken up with baths, meals, paperwork'. They themselves also reported to be unsure of the signs to look for when evaluating the benefits of an activity for their residents. It is important to note here that where a limited amount of training around reflective practice did take place with care staff, this was perceived by stakeholders to have had a significant impact on the staff in question.

### *Families*

A key unanticipated outcome of the project is that the relatives of residents who witnessed the sessions also appeared to have benefitted from the project. For example, the husband of one of the residents (who lived independently) visits his wife every day in the care home. This man was a singer in his youth. He began volunteering with the project, supporting the singing element of the sessions. The artist facilitator spoke of the happiness that participating in the sessions brought to him and his wife as they remembered memories from the past, as well as the sense of purpose which he derived from supporting the sessions. It was also reported that once family members became aware that the sessions were taking place and had witnessed their relatives' enjoyment of the sessions, they would specifically time their visits to coincide with the sessions. In one care home, four or five family members would often attend the sessions. One of the artist facilitators further reported receiving positive feedback from family members about the sessions: 'the feedback was that sometimes, you know, when they were visiting, like an hour's a long time, two hours is a long time with nothing to do whereas this had made visiting a pleasurable experience'. It would be useful to explore family members' perceptions of the impacts of the sessions in respect of their relatives, their relationships with their relatives and their relationships with the care home, further in Year Two.

### *Legacy*

A key challenge for the project remains creating a legacy within participating care homes. At one of the care homes that took part in the project, one of the volunteers (who is also a relative of a resident) continues to lead a creative workshop with the residents each week, which playing the ukulele. The artist facilitator explained: 'Alan is, every Wednesday, they have a session. He leads it with ukulele which is great. So in a way, although the staff aren't involved, they have actually ensured that that's continuing'. A further outcome in this care home is that the artist facilitator and volunteer group intend to record a CD containing a compilation of the songs that they sang with the residents during their time at a home and to produce a song book containing the lyrics of each song on the CD. The hope is that will further support the sustainability of the music sessions (and the ethos underpinning the sessions) within the home. Nonetheless, the legacy of the project within the care homes remains questionable as none of the care home staff who took part in the project are known to have continued delivering creative workshops with the residents of a similar nature to those delivered through the project. Of further concern is that none of the care homes that took part in the project have had discussions with the volunteers about the continuation of support with creative activity within the home beyond the duration of the project.

Linked to this, project managers perceived one of the volunteer groups' support of the sessions, in particular, as 'something to do to help [the artist]...they all love [the artist] and they will do it because they love [the artist]'. It is anticipated that in the long term, the group will 'follow [the artist] as opposed to staying with the home'. There was a feeling among

stakeholders that while some of this group will continue to support activities within care homes, additional volunteers will need to be recruited to sustain this element of the project.

Where volunteers are less keen to support creative activity within the care homes, stakeholders suggested that they could nonetheless share their experiences of participating in the project and the skills they have learned with prospective or new volunteers. This would ensure their continued involvement in the wider project.

### ***Assessment of the Project Delivery Model***

On the whole, the project delivery model was largely observed and reported to have been effective, as evidenced by the positive outcomes and impacts of the project as outlined above; although it is important to highlight that a number of difficulties were also encountered in relation to project processes and working practices.

#### *Volunteer Support*

In some cases, it was reported that volunteers had support needs when supporting activity within the care homes which placed an additional element of responsibility on the artist facilitators. As one stakeholder observed, *'some of the volunteers have their own needs...I know from one group, there's a lot of people wanting to talk to her...I know with [artist], you know, maybe sometimes it feels a bit too much that everyone was wanting her attention...it's about having a bit of a boundary at some points'*. Furthermore, despite the volunteers receiving some informal training before going into the care homes, some spoke of confusion regarding the boundaries of their role in relation to supporting the residents' physical needs during the sessions. The artist facilitators reported they understood there to be boundaries to the level of support which the volunteers could offer to residents for purposes of health and safety and to be anxious when perceiving the volunteers to have inadvertently *'crossed these boundaries'*. For example, they recalled, *'A few things with [John] trying to get quite frail people up and out of their seats where I've had to say, "You can't assume that person can stand up and jig around because you can". And that was hard and then, a lot about boundaries...I was saying, "No, for Health and Safety reasons. We're volunteers. I know it sounds cruel but if somebody wants to go to the toilet or somebody asks for something it's not up to us to do that'*. At the same time, there was confusion in the care homes about the boundaries of the volunteers' role. For example, one member of staff in a care home said *'we train in here up to NVQ level 3 in moving and handling, how to lift people properly, how to get them up and down...it's up to the carers to do things like that'*, while another reported to be unaware of any guidelines that the volunteers needed to follow when supporting the residents.

#### *The Resourcing of Sessions*

A further issue in respect of the project delivery model was that the sessions could be insufficiently resourced at times. As one stakeholder said, *'I think the weakest part of it is in the homes...it's not that it doesn't work in the homes – the session are wonderful – but there's not enough infrastructure there to maximise what's happening'*. Some the sessions within the care homes were described as *'chaotic'*. One stakeholder, for example, said: *'Some of the sessions can get a bit frantic...I can't get to every session and I know when I am there that you leave and you are absolutely shattered'*, while one of the activities coordinators said, *'I felt sorry for [the artist] a bit as she was trying to play the ukulele and trying to turn the pages. So it must be quite tiring for her to do everything. It's organised but chaotic at the same time. When you are singing, someone could be upset and you have to sit with them and hold their hand so it's then difficult to get up and turn the pages'*. In Year One, it is important to note that no distinction was made between staff who were attending the sessions to learn new skills and staff who were attending the sessions in order to support the residents. This proved to be problematic, particularly in sessions where staff were learning to play the ukulele. Here they reported to feel unable to focus on developing their creative and facilitation skills, while supporting the residents at the same time. There were also disparities in the level of volunteer and care staff support which the artists had at each session, with an overwhelming number of volunteers and care staff at the sessions sometimes proving to be equally as problematic as insufficient support.

In order to maximise the impact of the project for all stakeholders, one of the artist facilitators suggested that the number of volunteers and care staff that attend the sessions in respect of the number of residents should be agreed in advance, with each assigned a specific support role or group of residents to support during the sessions. They explained: *'my wish list would be to be able to get volunteers and staff in the session who have a more formalised role' and 'I do think it is worthwhile us looking for next year at how many volunteers we have within the session, about their skill sets. It isn't just a project about people who are living in care, singing and being entertained. It is actually about promoting the skills of staff and confidence and if you have one staff member and 25 residents, that member of staff is going to get nothing out'*. The second artist

facilitator suggested that there be a maximum of 20 residents permitted to attend each session irrespective of levels of care staff/volunteer support.

Problems were also raised in respect of the physical spaces in which some of the sessions were held. The artist facilitators reported that on occasion, the rooms being used for the sessions were too small to accommodate the number of participants, leading to rooms overheating and residents becoming uncomfortable during the sessions. In other cases, carers were perceived to be failing to provide residents with basic levels of care during the sessions, such as providing them with refreshments, leading to feelings of anxiety among the artist facilitators and volunteers, as well as the residents.

It was also felt that the sessions were inadequately resourced in respect of the artist facilitators being able to 'debrief' with the care staff regarding how they felt the sessions were progressing, how they would like the sessions to develop, what they felt they were gaining through the programme and what changes they were observing among the residents. One of the artist facilitators said, *'the thing that for me is lacking is the debrief after. I manage to get a quick debrief with the volunteers but we always talk like on a Friday about what's happened – that emotional flooding that happens at the end of a session – when we meet for our practice session. I think that's really important'*.

### *Management Support / Project Expectations*

Underpinning some of the challenges discussed was the absence of pro-active support for the project from care home managers. One of the artist facilitators who worked in two care homes during Year One said, *'both of them have managers who seem to think that what we are doing is absolutely nothing to do with them'*. In one case, the artist reported that the manager did not meet with them at the start of the project, that they did not engage in conversation with them during the ten-week period and further, they felt unwelcome at the home during the sessions. In relation to the second care home, the artist said, *'the other manager always said hello but then just absented herself from the sessions and just, it was almost like they weren't happening'*. Both artist facilitators stressed that management support for the project will be essential to achieving positive, sustainable changes with the care homes. Comments included: *'we need the managers support for that really...that's the really challenging bit'*, *'at the beginning, they always seem committed and it seems, as soon as you're there, they're not interested'*, *'I wonder whether they actually know what it is. It seems to me they always deter it to the activities coordinator'* and *'there's absolutely no support from the management...I think the legacy there will be minimal. I think we might have opened a few doors for [Sarah] and for [John] but without the support from the manager, I think things will go back to how they were and it'll...I don't know if they're at a stage yet where they're confident enough...if the staff aren't being encouraged by the manager and the manager is not really seeing it as anything other than the residents being entertained for an hour, then it doesn't matter how long we go in, that's not going to change'*. An activities coordinator also confirmed the importance of management support when undertaking this type of project, in terms of providing leadership and motivating staff, as well as providing practical support with the project, in terms of the scheduling of staff time, for example.

While it was agreed that greater emphasis should be placed on the managers' involvement in the project during Year Two, it should be noted that progress towards this was made during the first year, with the development of a more formal induction process, involving a meeting with the care home manager and a letter being sent to the care home confirming their eligibility to take part in the project, key project dates, a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Equal Arts' contact details. The MoU contains a project description, project management arrangements, the expected resource input/contributions of all parties and project timescales. It must be signed by both the care home and Equal Arts at the project outset. One stakeholder said: *'We've been doing that and we're very firm about it...we have said 'This is training' because we've learned as we've gone along'*. While another said, *'at first this approach seemed to work but the difficulty I had was the manager was very enthusiastic when we did the pre-visit, was like 'great' but never once supported the sessions – ever...and because the manager wasn't engaged, I couldn't have that dialogue with her'*. Even where the MoU was in place, therefore, there were problems around its enforcement. Following the signing of a MoU, stakeholders reported that *'At XX, at the first session, the manager was actually there but then I'm not sure that [the artist] saw her after that'*. Indeed, there were discussions during the evaluation process about the complex nature of the relationship that exists between the project managers, artist facilitators and care home staff.

On the topic of the wider culture within the care homes, notable is that neither of the two activities coordinators in one home reported to understand the term 'person-centred approach'. They also reported that the home has two dementia champions but reported to be unaware of what their role involves or to work with them collaboratively when developing activities for the residents, including those who suffer from dementia. There was

also a lack of coordination between the care staff and activities coordinators. One stakeholder pointed out, *I don't think [XXX] feels valued. He is working completely in isolation*'.

### *Format of the Sessions*

Finally, when asked for their thoughts on how the sessions/programme could be improved, care staff who learned to play the ukulele reported that it would have been useful for a greater proportion of the sessions to be dedicated to staff training. Staff reported that the format of the sessions varied; while an hour was dedicated to staff training some weeks, this was reduced to just 20 minutes other weeks. All of the staff interviewed reported that they would have liked some of the sessions to be focused solely on training. For example, one said, *'Some of the sessions have been a little bit confusing. Instead of teaching you to do one thing at a time, you do a couple of things...we were doing strumming patterns and that confused me completely. If it was to be done again, I think doing one thing at a time would be better. It's too much to remember. If you are practising one thing at a time that would be better then you have the whole week to focus on it'*, while another said, *'I think the practice could be a little bit longer. We only get about 20 minutes then the rest of the time is with the residents. Sometimes during the week with having a busy life, you don't get time to practice at home'*. The staff also reported that they would have liked the programme to be longer than ten weeks, saying, for example: *'No, it's not enough time. I'm only just starting to know how to do things on the ukulele...and there are so many other things to think about'*. The staff suggested that a more 'staged' training process would also make the aims of the project more achievable: *'Last week, we spend more time practising which I thought was better...maybe alternate weeks, we could just practice with her, then the next week you play, rather than trying to do both, you cannot concentrate from one to the other. So I think slightly longer practice time would be good'*.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As stated at the outset of this report, the project team made significant progress towards meeting the key project milestones identified for Year One. In particular, following the successful recruitment of two volunteer groups, not only have they been supported to develop their own creative skills and talents, but the sessions have had a profound effect on the volunteers' emotional wellbeing, by providing them with an opportunity to express themselves. The groups have not only explored their own identities through the project, they had also developed strong senses of collective identity. All of the volunteers signalled their enjoyment of the sessions, reported the sessions to be very sociable events and talked of the quality of the friendships which they had made. They also indicated that taking part in the weekly training sessions had been of significant benefit to their health – giving them a greater awareness of the importance of physical wellbeing, increased mobility and fitness and notably, it was reported that on several occasions, they have been able to overcome their physical limitations while participating in the sessions. The volunteers found supporting activity in the care homes to be a positive experience, providing them with a sense of achievement and greater appreciation of their personal circumstances. A key unanticipated outcome of the project is for one of the volunteer groups to have developed into a strong performance group. Early findings of the evaluation also indicate that the sessions have had a positive impact on the quality of life of the residents who took part by providing them with an enjoyable experience (evidenced by increased levels of smiling, laughter and energy following participation in the sessions). It was also reported that the sessions have strengthened the sense of community within the care homes and enhanced relationships between staff and residents by providing participants with an opportunity for shared experiences, a new topic of conversation and importantly, a forum for the sharing of memories and life experiences. Finally, the sessions have enhanced the creative and facilitation skills of the care staff who took part and enhanced their awareness of the opportunities that the arts provide for the adoption of a more person-centred approach to supporting the wellbeing of residents.

Despite this, a key challenge for the project is in respect of creating a 'legacy' within the care homes. In only one care home to date is it known that creativity workshops of the similar nature to those delivered through the project have continued. Of particular note here is that the sessions continue to be led by a volunteer who is a relative of one of the residents. It is possible, however, that singing sessions supported by the ukulele will continue in a second care home and staff in a further care home reported that they have utilised some of the skills learned through the project when engaging with their residents. One member of care staff has also become a member of the project steering group and a further member of staff suggested that they would like to continue engaging with the project via sharing events, for example. Of further importance is that none of the care homes and volunteers have arrangement to continue to collaboratively deliver creative workshops with the residents. Instead, it is likely that the volunteer groups will continue to work with participating care homes on a short term basis.

A number of key barriers to the achievement of project aims and objectives were identified during Year One. These include the limited opportunities of care staff to engage in training around the benefits of creative activity for older people, the limited opportunities available to them for experiential learning and their limited skills in reflective practice. There was also suggestion that care staff lacked a detailed understanding of the project including the ethos and long term aims of the project and that they are one element of a much bigger initiative. Lack of management support for the project within the care homes was also observed to have reinforced these issues and be linked to the adequate resourcing of the sessions, in terms of adequate spaces for the sessions to take place, the engagement of a consistent or indeed wide pool of staff to take part in the sessions and the provision of appropriate refreshments during the sessions, for example. Finally, the sessions were described as chaotic at times, with irregular ratios of staff and volunteer support in respect of the number of residents taking part in the sessions each week. There was also a sense that the structure and format of the ten week programme placed limited the capacity for staff training in relation to the benefits of creative activity for residents and the development of their creative and facilitation skills. In all, at the end of the ten week programme, care homes were yet to have assumed ownership of the project, while in some cases, lacking confidence to continue following the programme structure without the support of the wider team. Outside the focus on care homes, there are concerns about the extent to which the project volunteers understand the project objectives; with many anticipated to follow the journey of the artist facilitators in the coming year, rather than developing lasting relationships with care homes.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, it was possible to identify a series of recommendations to enhance the project delivery model and further support the achievement of the long term goals of the project. Many of these have already been discussed with the core project stakeholders.

1. The core project team meet to reflect upon key learning points from Year One and agree on key objectives and associated actions for Year Two.
2. The project is promoted to care homes as an initiative which contributes to their long-term agendas, particularly around creating 'dementia-friendly communities' and 'person-centred' approaches to care, rather than as an 'arts for elders' project. This may help incentivise more meaningful engagement with the project.
3. The targeted recruitment of care homes that are more likely to embrace the ethos of the project. This could be achieved by utilising links such as the Care Alliance or identifying suitable care homes through project sharing/promotion events.
4. The targeted recruitment of volunteers who are likely to form lasting relationships with specific care homes. This may include the recruitment of relatives of residents to the project. As one stakeholder said: *we need to identify who the right volunteers are...who might get something out of it and stick with the home as that how you get culture change, rather than just going in for ten weeks*'.
5. Hosting a sharing event in Year Two would help raise the profile of the project, promote the ethos of the project, celebrate the achievements of project participants and support the recruitment of volunteers and care homes to the project.
6. A formal induction to the project for care home managers and staff may enhance the outcomes of the project. This may constitute an initial session dedicated solely to care staff, covering topics such as: the benefits of creativity activity to older people's wellbeing, the aims of the project, the structure of the programme and the responsibilities/expectations of all project stakeholders. These would include the adequate resourcing of the sessions in respect of the number of residents taking part in the session in respect of levels of volunteer and staff support available, ensuring that adequate physical space is made available for the sessions and that refreshments are provided during the sessions.
7. A more formal training process for participating care staff may also support the achievement of outcomes/impacts. This may include: a greater proportion of the programme being dedicated to developing the creative, facilitation and reflective practice skills of care staff; engagement with residents taking the form of a more 'staged' process; care staff being given clearly assigned roles during the sessions; the inclusion of a debriefing process at the end of each session to nurture staff understanding of the outcomes/impacts of the sessions; and, the dedication of the final session of the programme to supporting staff to develop an agreed action plan regarding the sustainability of the sessions. A follow-up meeting with the care homes may also be useful in encouraging the continuation of the sessions. Artist facilitators were keen supporters of this approach.

8. Certificates should be produced for staff who take part in the project to evidence their achievements. This may also help to demonstrate the value of the project to wider members of staff within the homes. The care staff interviewed welcomed the idea of receiving a certificate upon completion of the ten-week programme to evidence their achievements.
9. A formal induction and training process for volunteers may be beneficial, providing an opportunity to clearly outline the aims and objectives of the project to volunteers, emphasise their intended role within the project and discuss any health and safety issues which may arise when supporting activity with the care homes, for example. The delivery of the sessions by the project manager would be useful in terms of consistency and demonstrating to volunteers that they are part of a larger initiative. It may also be beneficial in terms of separating the formal elements of the project from the volunteers' creative spaces/processes.
10. A greater focus on 'peer-learning' within the project process – i.e. enabling volunteers to play a greater mentoring role in relation to care staff – may enhance relations between care staff and volunteers and in turn