

suffolkartlink

Our Place Project Report  
December 2017

longevity  
vibrant  
personal creative  
spontaneity exciting  
energetic sensory  
genuine  
**inclusive**  
fresh connection  
morale fantastic  
involvement expression  
inspiring passion  
conflict fun

A Suffolk Artlink project in partnership with The Partnership in Care (TPiC)

## **About us**

Suffolk Artlink is a participatory arts charity, with over ten years' experience of devising innovative and robust creative projects to engage with different communities across the county and beyond.

Our work is informed by, and contributes to, the growing body of evidence attesting to the instrumental value of the arts; as such, we promote participation in high quality creative activities as a positive way of improving health and wellbeing and developing practical and social skills.

Suffolk Artlink works with professional artists and national organisations to maintain the highest standards of delivery, and pride themselves on the efforts they make to forge strong partnerships, be they in the health, care, voluntary or community sectors, to reach their participants.

## **The Partnership in Care**

The Partnership in Care is a family run business, with over 25 years' experience of providing residential care across the eastern region.

They have six homes in Suffolk which offer clients a wide spectrum of care ranging from a secure and caring place to live, to 24 hour professional nursing care. All homes have registration for clients living with some degree of dementia.

Their philosophy is to enable individuals to live as they choose, believing that living in care does not equate with a need to give up on what is important in an individual's life.

## **Spare Tyre Theatre Company**

Spare Tyre is a leading participatory arts charity based in London, with over 40 years' experience of producing bold and powerful theatre with voiceless communities and individuals. They use a multi-art form multi-sensory approach to collaborative participatory art and their Artist Director, Arti Prashar, provided training for care home staff and artists, and also acted as Creative Mentor to the artists during delivery of the residencies.

## **MB Associates**

MB Associates works with people across the cultural, learning, care and community sectors. They are action-focused and combine rigour with creative facilitation; they believe that change is most effective when people are given a real say.

MB Associates was set up in 2005 by Mandy Barnett, a change management expert and accredited SROI (Social Return on Investment) practitioner with over 25 years' experience in the non-profit sectors, including as a project and senior manager.

Ruth Melville of MB Associates worked closely with Suffolk Artlink to develop an evaluation framework to elicit and collect data to inform the evaluation of Our Place.

## **Arts Council England**

Our Place is funded through Grants for the Arts, an open access funding programme from Arts Council England.

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## Our Place summary

Our Place is an exciting opportunity for Suffolk Artlink to develop our work with care homes, piloting a new way of bringing artists together with care home staff, residents and families in order to develop a while home approach to embedding creative interaction. The development of the project was informed by learning from other Suffolk Artlink work and recommendations from the SROI report 'Make My Day' which analysed the impact of a previous artist-led training programme with care home staff.

Specific recommendations that influenced the development of Our Place were: to maintain opportunities for experiential learning; to make more use of artists time in the homes; to use different approaches to social and individual creativity to involve more residents; to include families more; to develop a bespoke approach to the culture of each home through a 'discovery tool' (i.e. exploring staff and residents' needs, skills and interests); and to consider the impact on artists practice and its development.

Consultation with some of our artists to understand the potential benefits and impacts for them, followed by meetings with The Partnership in Care (our partner residential care home group) helped further develop our ideas. This included: the participation of artists in TPiC's carers training programme; considering how to best work across a group of homes, whilst bringing a flexible approach to respond to individual homes and their staff, residents and families; and building in opportunities for artists to work collaboratively. Working with Spare Tyre Theatre Company brought in expertise and an outside perspective to lead on quality of arts experience and support for our team of artists.

As readers of this report will understand there have been successes and lessons learned from this pilot project. The residencies created magical, playful environments. The artists were successful in engaging residents in high numbers and positively impacting on their wellbeing, and reaching residents who often choose not to get involved in group activities. They also worked with numerous family members and friends. The artists had opportunities to challenge and develop their practice in collaboration with others and in some homes staff are using new ways of engaging with residents and consequently having more fulfilling experience at work. However, we have also understood the need for a more collaborative approach in developing plans with each home in order to include everyone in the programme and ensure the best experience. We will use this learning for the development of our work in care homes in the future.

# The thinking behind Our Place

Our Place was developed to pilot a ‘whole home’ approach to embedding creative interaction and engagement between residents, families and staff in care home environments through a year-long programme of training and artists’ residencies.

The project formed new relationships with the The Partnership in Care and Spare Tyre Theatre Company. A team of six artists worked in pairs in each of the six TPiC homes, sharing skills with care staff and engaging residents in a high quality experience.

## Our Place aims

- Make a positive impact on the wellbeing of care home residents (OP)
- Develop confidence and creative skills in care home staff (Staff)
- Increase the level of meaningful engagement between residents, families and staff (CH)
- Develop a whole home approach to embedding creativity with care homes (CH)
- Develop models of best practice for artists working in care settings (A)
- Develop tools to assess the skills, resources and needs of care homes (CH)
- Support and develop individual artists practice. (A)

The aims relate to four distinct groups: older people, staff, the care home itself, and artists. The intended impacts on these different groups are illustrated in the **Our Place – Story of Change** diagram below.



Diagram 1: Our Place Story of Change

## The artists



**Caitlin Howells:** Caitlin is an experienced multi-artform artist, specialising in carnival arts and puppetry. She has over 10 years' experience as a qualified play work and is a Sainsbury Centre Artist Educator

<http://www.caitlinhowellscommunityarts.wordpress.com>



**Dean Parkin:** Dean was Creative Director of The Poetry Trust and now runs Poetry People. He was a Jerwood/Arvon Young Poet in 2003 and selected as a Live Literature Escalator Artist in 2008. He released his first collection of poems in 2016 and has a wealth of experience as a creative workshop leader and poet. In 2014-15, Dean created the Poem for Suffolk, resulting in films, a book and a touring show.

<http://www.deanparkin.co.uk>



**Kaitlin Ferguson:** Kaitlin is a visual artist: her practice is a multi-disciplinary and she works with a variety of materials; from small scale paper collages through to outdoor metal sculptural installations. Since graduating with a 1st Class BA (Hons) Degree in Fine Art in 2011 she has been exhibiting and coordinating different art projects and exhibitions and working as an Artists Educator at the Sainsbury Centre.



**Lucy Enskat:** Lucy trained in Drama at the University of East Anglia, Oxford School of Drama, and has performed for many years with the award-winning Young Pleasance. She also trained in Clown with Complicite and with the acclaimed Avner Eisenberg. Lucy started Hocus Pocus Theatre in 2008 where is currently the Artistic Director

<http://www.hocuspocustheatre.co.uk>



**Sarah Franklin:** Sarah is a dance artist with over 25 years' experience of choreography and teaching and is a regular dance tutor with DanceEast.



**Sophie Fox:** Sophie is an experience artist, having led multi-artform workshops (visual arts, music, etc) for 15 years, and working with different age groups. Sophie has been a regular contributor to the Magic Adventure, an interactive musical and visual theatre for very young audiences.

<http://www.sophiefox.com>

## Setting up the project

Suffolk Artlink recruited a team of six artists working across a range of disciplines (poetry, dance, visual arts, performance and live artists) to work in the six residential homes. Having met prior to Our Place for a consultation on their expectation and needs of the project, the artists then attended three days of training organised by TPiC – a two-day induction course and a day on person-centred care.

The next step was to establish what already happened in each home and identify areas that could benefit from development. MB Associates produced a 'Discovery Tool' assisting the artists and project officer to consult with staff, residents and visitors and identify how and where creativity could make a positive difference.

Based on these findings, a unique brief for each residency was devised, and the artists were contracted to deliver the residencies. In addition to the specific brief, artists were generally expected to work in a variety of spaces throughout the homes such as the kitchens, gardens and bedrooms as well as communal lounge spaces. They were to focus on aspects of the environment including care at night, one-to-one engagement with residents, transforming how space was used and connecting homes with their communities. The artists were also to provide inspiration and mentoring for the Creative Champions to support *The Partnership in Care* in continuing to use creativity to increase wellbeing in their homes in the future.

Following the 'Discovery' visit, each home selected three members of staff / residents / family members, of whom at least one would be a member of the management team, to be Creative Champions. Their role was to support the project in general, and to develop their own practice, through engagement with the residencies and also by attending the training sessions.

The artists and the Creative Champions next met at a training day delivered by Arti Prashar, the project's Creative Mentor. The training was designed to develop confidence in being creative, generating ideas, recognising opportunities for engagement and embedding this in everyday practice; the embedding was in part to be achieved through the dissemination of learning throughout the care homes by the Creative Champions. It also gave the artists the opportunity to meet up with the Creative Champions and discuss the brief (and identify any other issues that may have arisen) for the home where they would deliver the residency.

Working closely with TPiC's Quality Assurance Lead and a point of contact in each home, Artlink's project officer then programmed the six day residencies in each of the homes.

A final artists practice sharing session was scheduled following delivery of the residencies. The session was for the Our Place artists to meet with other artists working in care settings, to share some of their learning and experiences and hear other examples of good practice.

# The residencies

**Hazell Court Residency: 13<sup>th</sup> June – 28<sup>th</sup> July**  
**Artists: Dean Parkin and Sarah Franklin**  
**Residency theme: Creative Relationships**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Engagements</b>
Residents – 40	Residents – 102
Staff – 23	Staff – 41
Family – 6	Family – 6
Total beneficiaries – 69	Total engagements – 149

**Risby Hall Residency: 15<sup>th</sup> June – 5<sup>th</sup> August**  
**Artists: Caitlin Howells and Kaitlin Ferguson**  
**Residency theme: Creative Outdoors**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Engagements</b>
Residents – 25	Residents – 95
Staff – 34	Staff – 45
Family – 42	Family – 50
Total beneficiaries – 101	Total engagements – 190

**Sherrington House Residency: 12<sup>th</sup> June – 20<sup>th</sup> July**  
**Artists: Sophie Fox, Lucy Enskat, Caitlin Howells**  
**Residency theme: Sensory Exploration**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Engagements</b>
Residents – 37	Residents – 93
Staff – 15	Staff – 26
Family – 9	Family – 10
Total beneficiaries – 61	Total engagements – 129





**Prince of Wales Residency: 28<sup>th</sup> June – 28<sup>th</sup> July**  
**Artists: Sophie Fox and Lucy Enskat**  
**Residency theme: Playfulness**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Engagements</b>
Residents – 35	Residents – 131
Staff – 13	Staff – 29
Family – 8	Family – 18
Total beneficiaries – 56	Total engagements – 178

**Beech House Residency: 24<sup>th</sup> July – 18<sup>th</sup> August**  
**Artists: Dean Parkin, Lucy Enskat**  
**Residency theme: Creative Confidence**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Engagements</b>
Residents – 32	Residents – 117
Staff – 25	Staff – 91
Family – 7	Family – 7
Total beneficiaries – 64	Total engagements – 215

**Risby Park Residency: 22<sup>nd</sup> August – 30<sup>th</sup> August**  
**Artists: Sophie Fox, Kaitlin Ferguson**  
**Residency theme: Space Exploration**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Engagements</b>
Residents – 29	Residents – 76
Staff – 31	Staff – 44
Family – 8	Family – 15
Total beneficiaries – 68	Total engagements – 135



For details of individual residencies please see Appendix I

# Evaluation methodology

Suffolk Artlink commissioned MB Associates to devise an evaluation framework for Our Place and support the analysis of the data gathered. The independent researcher analysed the data highlighting common themes and progression towards outcomes.

## Quantitative Data Gathering

### *Staff questionnaires*

Staff were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire before and after the project residency. The questionnaire covered wellbeing, relationships, skills and environment. The after version also asked open questions about their experience of the residency and artists.

### *Project officer records*

In addition, project officers kept records of every interaction with the residency from residents, staff and friends and family. These noted how long the interaction went on, and the extent to which the person chose to engage.

## Qualitative Data Gathering

### *Artists' and project officers' observation and reflection*

Artists and project officers were briefed about the aims of the evaluation, centring the intended impacts around four areas: wellbeing, relationships, skills and environment as a shorthand.

They were asked to think about these in the design of their residency and explore how they could note any outcomes linked to these in the residency itself (this was particularly key around environment and relationships as these were aims of some of the residencies).

They were also asked to reflect on when and whether these outcomes took place during their time and to note them in their journal or other record. Neither writing nor any systematic recording felt a natural part of most of their practice and it was felt this would distract from the experience.

The project officers were given the same brief – to reflect and note any outcomes they noticed during their visits to the homes and to share these in the most appropriate form with the evaluator.

Artists and to a lesser degree project officers shared their experience during several elements of the creative evaluation sharing day (below) including during their 'artist journey' elements.

### *Individual home scrapbooks*

Each residency pair of artists was asked to put together a scrapbook (or other sharing and recording space) for the residency. This was to be a space where every day, all who engaged with the residency were asked to reflect on their experiences, to note any outcomes they noticed in others or experienced themselves.

This was given as a brief to the artists and they were able to interpret as appropriate themselves so that the data gathering fitted with the residency. In all homes the artists chose to use a scrapbook, and they were completed very effectively with a mix of photos and

comments and quotes. In two homes further scrapbooks were completed by staff off their own initiative.

## Post project activity

### *Focus group with home managers*

A focus group was carried out by the evaluator with all care home managers and deputy managers (12) as well as staff from head office (5) shortly after the last residency finished. This was used to gather data on the impacts on staff and the homes in general. It also led to a discussion on what worked and didn't work in terms of the project.

### *Creative evaluation sharing day*

About one month after the final residency finished, artists, project officers and key care home staff were brought together to share learning and experiences from Our Place, this was facilitated by two evaluators.

This was in the form of a series of creative exercises. In the morning the six artists and two project officers shared their experiences and the 'journeys' they'd been on with each other, and the homes, for the residencies. They also discussed learning and issues arising from the residency as this was the first time they'd been able to share learning.

In the afternoon they were joined by staff from all six care homes. Again this was the first time the groups had a chance to share their experiences and they were taken through three exercises to share the experience of the residencies, including outcomes, to share what worked and didn't work and begin to create the 'top tips' for a similar project, and to share the any lasting changes that had arisen from the work so far.

## Mapping of Method to impact measured

Group	Impact area	Method				
		Staff Questionnaire	Artist & PO Observation	Scrapbooks	Creative Evaluation day	Focus Group
Residents	Wellbeing	X	X	X	X	
	Relationships	X	X	X	X	
Staff	Confidence	X	X		X	X
	Skills	X	X		X	X
	Job satisfaction	X			X	X
	relationships	X	X	X	X	X
Care home	Creative culture/ environment	X	X	X	X	X
	Efficient approach to care	X	X		X	X
Artists	Improved knowledge and practice		X		X	

# Outcome Evaluation

This section of the report uses evidence collected through the evaluation framework alongside reflections by Suffolk Artlink to look at the progress towards achieving the planned outcomes for the project and the lessons learnt.

## The Discovery Tool

The Discovery Tool was created by MB Associates alongside the project officer in response to the brief:

1. To devise a creative approach that would identify areas of the home that the residents, staff and others want to focus on in order to create a brief for the artists to respond to during residencies
2. To engage the residents and staff in the project
3. To map the skills and interests of the residents, families and staff
4. To create a tool that could be shared with the wider sector

The development and trial of the Discovery Tool mapped out a creative consultation process. The design was done by MB Associates with Suffolk Artlink, the action learning trial was carried out by the Our Place Project Officer along with the artists later involved in the residencies.

The process was found in general to be useful for engaging with staff, and to a degree with residents. Some of the tools needed to be adapted to allow the 1 to 1 interaction needed with some residents with dementia. In addition it was found that more conceptual elements of the tool needed to be adapted to engage residents. As a result of these, the project officer felt that the tool lacked creativity.

The discovery tool was used to shape the specific angle of the residencies. Not one of the artist teams or homes felt the need to move away from these general themes, and they seemed to work well as a stimulus for ideas. This shows the real value of the tool which should be developed into a format which is both creative and appropriate to the participant group.

This tool can be used for scoping most future collaborations for SA and TPiC with some further development.

Key lessons learnt:

1. The discovery tool was successful in creating a bespoke brief for each home and provides a good framework on which to develop a future version
2. The discovery tool could be more creative. In any future development of the tool, artists could be involved at an earlier stage in order to contribute more creative ways of engaging with residents
3. The diagnostic was not successful at engaging the whole home in the project. In future, this could be combated by appointing Creative Champions before the Discovery tool is delivered as well as improving communications about the project and its aims across the homes. In addition, consideration to the involvement of artists at an earlier stage should be given.

## Impact on residents

Overall the data suggests that the residencies increased resident wellbeing while they were taking place with a high level of engagement by residents and improved relationships between residents, artists and staff.

The residencies were fun and made people happy, they cheered up the spaces of the home and added colour, sound and stimulation to offer a change to the norm and awaken the senses.

Staff and family members also noted that residents were more relaxed after the residency. Many staff mentioned planning to use some of the techniques in the future, acknowledging their value in improving residents' day-to-day quality of life.

### Further detail on the evidence of impact on residents:

#### 1. Engagement:

Residents got involved in high numbers across all homes. Between 25 and 40 took part in each home and a total of 201 across all homes took part in residency activity at least once, and most did on several occasions.

For those who took part, most interaction was lasting (70% classified as long engagement, only 15% as short) and nearly all was of their own volition. 80% got involved as soon as they saw something was going on, with no need to do more than offer, only in 4% of engagements did residents need some persuasion to take part.

Their engagement included fully joining in the activity, actively observing, commenting and making suggestions or contributions to the development of the residency.

#### 2. Wellbeing:

Evidence of impact of the project on residents wellbeing was collected from the qualitative feedback gathered as part of the project. This data was themed in response to definitions of wellbeing as defined by family, friends, care staff and other professionals involved in the project.

Feedback from family and friends (via the scrapbooks and creative evaluation day) associated wellbeing for their relatives as: -

- 'being happy', 'having fun', and 'feeling calmer'

It was also associated with

- having their memories roused
- having social experiences, particularly new experiences

Arti Prashar's and MB Associates' experience, as well as feedback from artists and staff, added in

- the importance of the atmosphere of the home
- input of appropriate sensory stimulation

- human interaction, the opportunity for social engagement, fun and support in meeting their emotional needs, for example feeling calmer, as well as their physical needs.

It was also recognised that residents' wellbeing could be negatively affected by unwanted changes to routines or jarring activity that didn't fit with their mood at the time.

The outcomes in terms of resident wellbeing are explored below:

#### *Being happy, having fun, feeling calmer*

From analysis of comments in the scrapbooks in particular, as well as feedback from artists and particularly staff during the creative evaluation day, it is clear that residents taking part in the residency had fun and enjoyed the residency activities.

The residencies brought fun, playfulness and something to do which was inclusive and person centred – rather than a performance to be watched. Many residents directly engaged in the fun, including making jokes and dressing up, suggesting things to do and commenting on the various elements of the residencies.

Some family members noted residents feeling calmer after some elements of the residency, these were where the artists had had a bit more time to spend with one person than staff generally can, but also had the skills and to respond and adapt what they were doing for that particular person's needs.

#### *Sensory stimulation & recalling memories*

The use of colour, smell, taste, feel and sound was at the heart of all the residencies. The use of birdsong to bring the outdoors inside, and the cuddly toy bird combined sound and feel and brought joy and interest for residents.

A hand massage using scented cream stimulated a memory: -

*"Ooh that feels nice... they've done lots of work, these hands on the fields, I loved it ..dropping potatoes in, all sorts" (quote from resident in scrapbook)*

In some homes plants were used as sensory stimulation *"it must be years since she felt grass"* (family) and in another the 'cocktail trolley' added taste to the mix of sensory stimulation.

In one of the busier homes the artists created a 'chill-out' area for residents who wished to withdraw from the activities taking place in the main area of the lounge.

With its subdued lighting, soft furnishings and muted colours, this in itself became a talking point amongst residents and staff.

#### *Positive environment of the home*

Everyone agreed that the residencies created a magical playful environment that fitted around the residents' needs. Particularly valuable in this was the use of sensory approaches, mobile installations which could move to where residents were, and the ability to adapt to fit every resident's individual need or interest.

Colour came up as a repeated theme in terms of the feeling residents reported about the residencies via the scrapbook. In some homes staff reported the whole home's environment changed for the day and this 'immersive' experience was particularly engaging for the residents whether it was a lively one, or a calm one:

*“It feels different, less stressed, it feels calmer when I’m going around and you are here working, it feels good” (staff)*

#### *Human interaction and new social experiences*

Most homes noted that the artists were able to connect with residents who often chose not to get involved in group activities.

*“She doesn’t usually like groups. She engages one-to-one but groups like this she doesn’t usually do – so this is good.” (staff about resident)*

The artists had time to focus on a person for longer and they were a new face. However, it was also felt to be partly down to their skill in engaging with people and coming up with new ways to stimulate engagement.

For example, residents who were (by choice) in their bedroom were visited with different plants or pieces of turf to smell and feel, or with mobile sensory immersive environments (made from umbrellas). Their wellbeing was clearly improved by the opportunity to experience different sensory inputs and it stimulated them to talk.

*“I’ve not heard her talk so much ... she sprang to life.” (staff referencing resident)*

The very fact of having new people coming in, bringing new ideas and having time and energy to focus on engaging with the residents was felt to be really positive for nearly all residents.

The way some residencies worked to integrate spaces or get new uses for underused spaces meant that some residents used areas of the home they hadn’t been to before and enjoyed it.

At times, being new, allowed the artists to forge different connections. For example, one man who wasn’t able to speak seemed not to be enjoying a visiting music act. The artist struck up a conversation with him and found they shared a love of heavy metal so she shared her ipod with him and they sat companionably together.

#### *Unwanted changes to routines or jarring activity*

The residencies were a challenge for some residents and, as with staff, some did not want to take part. In most cases artists were able to adapt to a resident’s response but it is important to recognise that not everyone will want to take part.

### **3. Relationships**

The second area of expected impact for residents was in relationships. The artists clearly formed positive short term relationships with the residents which appear to have been valued by the residents and certainly were by the artists.

Much of the data for this is reported above so will not be repeated in depth here, but it is worth noting two recurring points relating to relationship building which were: -

- Artists having the time and skills to engage with people who don’t normally engage in group activity or in the engagement work in the homes, and those residents connecting in sharing memories

- Artists acting as a new face or with a new approach which stimulated different connections

*Positive outcomes for family and friends*

TPiC homes pride themselves on creating a home-from-home atmosphere – they encourage everyone to treat it as their own home, and family and friends are very welcome to visit and take part in whatever activities are taking place: as such several took part in Our Place.

81 different family members or friends engaged at some point across the residencies. They noted their relatives seemed happier and calmer, that they opened up more than usual, and they commented on the change in the atmosphere of the home, that it was more lively and colourful.

Some gained inspiration from particular activities, for example one daughter brought in more items for the sensory trolley after her mother enjoyed it so much (SH).

At Risby Hall, where the theme had been Creative Outdoors, the artists rearranged their days so that one could be present at a Family Day organised by the home. Family members and friends were invited to choose a plant for their relative and then make labels, sending them messages; these were then planted in the garden. At one stage, a whole family, including five grandchildren and four adults, chose plants and decorated a pot for their relative:

*“What a lovely idea, thank you so much for thinking of this – it’s very special.”* Family member comment to Project Officer

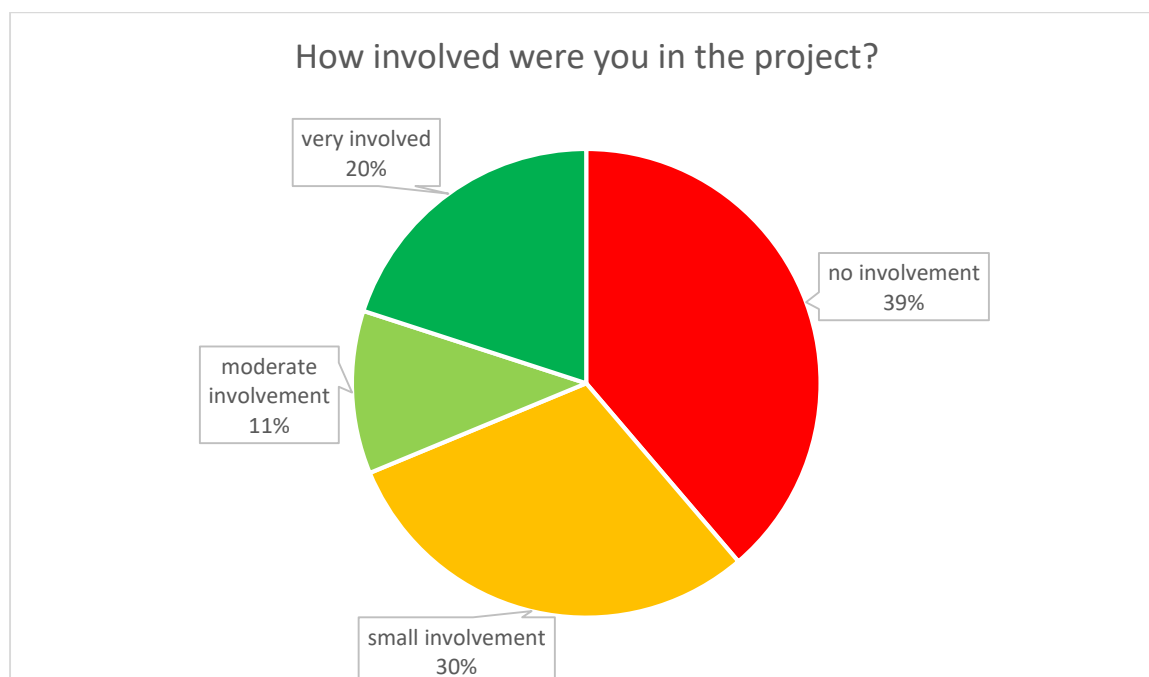


## Impact on staff



### Engagement

Feedback from the staff survey where staff were asked to give their level of involvement points to 20% who were very involved, 40% who had small to moderate involvement, and another nearly 40% who claimed no involvement (some of whom were on leave at the time). In two of the homes, every member of staff engaged in some way (unless they were off work at the time) as there were home-wide activities taking place.



### Confidence

Many staff reported that they gained confidence through taking part in the project. This came up verbally in the evaluation day, and is the most commonly mentioned outcome in the open questions of the survey – confidence rising in oneself and among colleagues.

They felt they had a wide range of new approaches and techniques to use, and also, having worked with the artists, had been helped to recognise the value of the skills and ideas they had, and their knowledge of the home and the residents.

Part of what drove the growth in confidence was being encouraged to try new things, and take a few risks, to be more playful, dress up, and step out of the everyday routine. This didn't work for everyone, but for some it helped them express a new part of themselves and see skills they hadn't realised they had. Managers commented particularly on the way the

artists' extroversion really 'gave staff permission' to try new things and noted an increase in confidence for a whole range of staff.

### **Skills**

Evidence collected from the staff questionnaires completed at baseline and end of the project showed a notable increase in staff feeling they knew how to use art in their jobs. 54% of staff agreed or greatly agreed that they had learnt new skills as part of their involvement with the project and qualitative feedback demonstrated staff feeling like they had lots of new ideas and techniques to use in engaging with residents.

These were usually phrased as concrete ideas or tools, but actually also reflected a new approach to engagement. For example, a couple of members of staff said they had got the idea of having a 'sensory trolley' so they had a range of different sensory stimulation tools to hand which meant that they could quickly adapt to whatever the resident they were working with felt like doing or responded best to – as opposed to planning a session and bringing one thing along.

In this example, the members of staff are implicitly describing developing both a new tool, and a different approach which is ready to be more flexible, adding to their already person-centred practice.

Further indication of increased skills is demonstrated in the list of ideas and tools mentioned by staff; the fact that they are actively considering the following activities suggests that they feel they have the skills to achieve them. Suggestions included:

- Making a permanent sensory room
- Using coloured swaths of fabric to add an instant new décor and interest to an area of the home – hanging them from the ceiling and stairs
- Having mobile 'immersive sensory areas' using umbrellas with hangings from them
- Continuing the scrapbook and / or sharing space
- Planning themed days which specifically include multi-sensory elements – smell, touch and taste in particular, as well as sight and sound

Changes in approaches were even more pervasive and although expressed differently by different members of staff, mainly centred round techniques to help themselves offer a more flexible response, and also take a more simple approach – valuing the time spent with the person.

This was summed up by one member of staff who said:

*"Simple is good – I kept trying to do lots of things, thinking complicated things were better and it was that I didn't know enough craft. Now I realise simple is good, simple things work"*

Another member of staff commented:

*"I keep feeling like I should be busy, but actually what is needed is time, spent with people"*

### **Relationships**

At least one of the residencies offered a specific chance to get to know other members of staff and residents in a new way through the team work approach and challenges to make up a story together and other co-working activities.

However, in many other cases there was mention of seeing people in a new light, e.g. the way a resident opened up to the artists when they usually didn't engage, or the skills of a fellow member of staff when challenged to be playful or try something out.

## Impact on care home



Figure 1: Wordcloud of 'top three words' given by managers and staff when asked to describe their residency

Overall there was a clear feeling that a difference was made to the homes with the residencies that involved all staff members being particularly effective. The project uncovered talents among staff, changed the way some of the physical spaces are used and provided ideas and techniques for staff to continue developing.

Developing a more creative culture and environment within the home was a central outcome for Suffolk Artlink and TPiC. From the reflections and data gathered this could be seen as three main areas:

- Who: bringing the home together, getting to know each other and not assuming that one person will always fit in one particular role or need.
- Where: physical changes to the environment which would stimulate change of use or change of experience, using spaces more creatively, not assuming that one space can only be used (or not used) in a particular way
- How: creative approaches to caring for residents, particularly in dealing with difficult times of day or difficult spaces to navigate through.

### **Creative Culture and Environment: Who**

Managers felt that in some cases the residencies had changed relations between staff, residents and management, and given more of a sense of the home as a whole place, rather than in silos based on where people lived or what they worked at.

In particular, at BH, the competitive element with team leaders and mixed teams of residents and staff from across the job roles worked to mix up roles and friendship groups. The gentle competition brought out a new side in people and this gave a different feel to the place.

This was echoed by the feedback from staff at the Evaluation Day and in questionnaires. The involvement of the whole home in at least one element of the residency – which happened at BH and POW – gave a different feel than in residencies which focused on one or two spaces or groups, and this was felt to be a benefit and enhanced the feeling of shared culture.

At BH in particular, managers saw new sides to members of staff, spotting hidden talents. However, in several homes the managers commented on staff being pushed out of their comfort zone, and seeming more confident.

In all homes it was agreed that limiting the residency to one group of staff or one space was not as effective as something that reached everyone.

### **Creative Culture and Environment: What**

Initial questions about changes in the environment led to responses around the physical environment. There were some changes to the physical environment that might be expected to have a lasting effect, in particular on the use and enjoyment of space.



The garden at RP was the focus of the work, and was seen as a clear benefit of the project, making it a more attractive and thus usable space, which in turn would benefit the residents who would be more likely to go outside.

*(The pagoda, with ribbons carrying personal memories of gardens from residents and staff)*

*“The garden was dreary, now it’s completely changed. People comment on it, [and it] goes through into the night as well – [with the] scarves and material and lights. One of the staff went and put lights in a resident’s room as he stays in it a lot - he got the idea from the garden.”*

Care staff feedback

The artists’ development of a temporary sensory room at SH had inspired the home to see the value of that room, and how it could work, and they have now made a permanent room using their learning and experience from the residency.

The focus in the residency on spaces that were not fully used helped staff to see how to integrate their usage into everyday activities. For example doing a similar activity in two places at different times, or at different energy levels; having mobile activities that can change the feel of an environment so what had been thought of always as a bit of a bleak

space can be made cosy or lively. This changed the physical feel of the home on a temporary basis, but more importantly gave staff and managers ideas of how they could change the feel themselves.

### **Creative Culture and Environment: How**

The main areas where managers and staff felt that there were changes in terms of building a more creative culture and environment were in techniques and ideas learnt. Many of these are mentioned above in staff skills, but below we mention a few that were specifically about transforming the environment of the home.



- In several places the artists' use of fabrics, lights and other relatively simple ideas to transform a space has been inspirational in helping the home see the potential of a space, or bringing an idea from one area of the home to another.

*"I just want it to stay up forever."* TPiC Manager

- Techniques such as sensory trolleys, umbrellas and other mobile ways of offering sensory stimulation and begin to get the immersive environment which people felt worked well.
- Staff felt they now had more ambitious ideas for whole home interaction, such as themed days using stimulation of all five senses and changing the whole feeling of the home.



### **More efficient approach to care**

Left out of the section above, due to potential overlap, is the focus on changing the culture of the homes in terms of their approach to care.

There were some changes to staff attitudes in terms of how to approach engaging with and caring for residents, but no sense that the project directly affected the staff team's approach to care, and particularly in how they took a more creative approach.

For a start, changing staff practice around care, and any concept of creative caring wasn't seen by any of the staff as one of the aims. This was particularly true of the managers speaking at the focus group. Most staff seemed unclear about the focus of the project as being on working with them, and certainly not in supporting the development of new approaches to embedding creativity in caring practice.

They saw themselves as the experts in care, and the artists' role as bringing in a bit more fun and opportunities for engagement with the residents, as well as (in some cases) changing the physical feel of the home. Thus at times the staff moved away to other work when the artists were around, so there was less potential for sharing practice and learning.

There were a few limited examples of where a member of staff mentioned a technique they had learnt from the artists which supported a more efficient approach to care, but they were very focused – one example which sums them up is a member of staff who now uses a trolley to bring not one, but several options of sensory activities to residents, so they can choose. This is clearly a more efficient approach to care – saving the member of staff running back and forth – and she was clearly very glad about that. It isn't clear how well any of these ideas are being embedded in the way the homes plan care, or among other members of staff who were less engaged or had less of a direct example of potential efficiency.

However, again there is some potential for longer term impact. In the managers' meeting, when pushed about what had changed, many felt that it was still a work in progress. Staff had been excited, challenged, engaged, they'd been given ideas – some more different than others. They'd been supported out of their comfort zones in doing their jobs and the managers now needed to give their staff 'permission to change'.

It feels like this is a telling comment: staff were not really aware that the aims of the project were about changing the environment of the homes, and developing a more creative approach to caring. They experienced a changed environment, and its positive effect on most residents and staff, and they have developed a few new techniques in caring, but these changes need to be embedded in the everyday, rather than being seen as part of a one-off project.

## Impact on artists



The project aimed to improve artists' knowledge and practice through the practical experience of taking part in TPiC and creative training, collaborating with another artist to deliver a residency at a care home and through practice sharing opportunities. It also made a difference to the artists' wellbeing and relationships through new working relationships with artists using other art forms, addressing the challenges of new environments through the positive experience of engaging with residents in an open and flexible manner and gaining positive responses to interactions.

### Improved knowledge and practice

#### *Greater understanding of care home environment and challenges*

Artists, managers and staff all felt the artists gained in terms of their knowledge of the setting and their skills in dealing with the residents in particular.

The artists noted that many of the techniques they used and shared were new to them, being developed with their artist partner for the project. They also reported a growth in confidence in the setting and all ended the project wanting to continue working in care homes and / or with older people.

None of the artists began the project feeling they knew a great deal about working in care homes. A couple felt very inexperienced. The training provided by TPiC and Arti Prashar was felt to be extremely useful and visits to the homes in advance (for the discovery tool sessions and planning) gave useful experience of the environment generally before their residency.

They all felt welcomed by the homes and given support in learning about the specific nature of each home. Artists spoke of the need to 'learn to navigate' the home – getting to know people, places, atmospheres at different times of the day. While they would have recognised this in advance, the understanding of a care home as a complex system of interacting dynamics where responses can change from one day to the next based on a huge range of factors came across strongly from the artists' descriptions of their residencies.

By the end of the project, it was clear from their discussion and comments that they could navigate their own homes, and knew the terminology and jargon of both the care home they worked in and others.

The artists also had a fuller understanding of the pressures of the care home staff, having seen how many things they needed to juggle at all times. They were also more able to express this understanding and show solidarity with staff, so that staff understood they were respected.

#### *New techniques and approaches*

The artists came in with many skills and useful approaches. Many staff and managers commented spontaneously on how skilful the artists were in working sensitively with individuals, giving them time and focus, responding creatively and sensitively to work



differently with different people based on their needs. The managers commented very positively on the artists all having 'our ethos'.

Thus the artists already had a lot of appropriate approaches when they arrived at the homes, but in planning and delivering the residency they developed a lot more ideas and techniques. More lasting than the specific techniques were the approaches they learnt, which helped them make the work fit with the residents and with the rhythms of the homes.

They all fed back that the project had definitely developed their practice. Approaches which worked in the setting included most of all the need to be flexible and responsive, to understand the unique culture of the home, to be spontaneous and responsive, use simplicity and not to 'over think', but to offer something exciting and different.

The confidence with which the artists shared these with each other, and their ability to spot commonalities during the sharing of their artist journeys showed that together they had developed a set of approaches which could be shared as 'good practice' for artists working in care homes generally.

Several artists spontaneously commented on their increased confidence in working in care homes and their wish to do so in future. The managers also felt they'd 'converted' the artists to want to work more in care homes – something they saw as a really positive achievement.

#### *New working relationships*

None of the artist pairs or groups had worked together before, this was clearly a positive experience, with many commenting on the value of the interaction and the creative energy to which it led. They learnt new approaches and techniques from each other, and also have potential new collaborators for future work.

#### *Wellbeing*

All artists clearly had many moments of enjoyment and fun in the project, particularly during work with residents. The playfulness and sense of joy came across strongly in their descriptions of their journeys. They also experienced moments of strong connection with residents and staff through working and sharing together.

Improved wellbeing came through addressing the positive challenges of working with a new group in a constantly changing atmosphere and professional satisfaction was gained from developing an approach that was particularly useful, e.g. sensory approaches to reach out in a new way.

The artists all approached the residencies with what one termed 'nerv-citement' – nervous excitement. They fed back that they felt more preparation, particularly in terms of knowing the settings and staff better, would have been helpful.

In most homes artists felt welcomed and accommodated by all staff and management. However, there were also moments where artists felt there was a lack of support, or felt emotionally challenged by their experience. These were rare, but did leave tension.

In one home some of the staff and management weren't willing or able to engage and although a full residency was delivered with the residents, this was difficult for the artists.

Finally, artists were affected by the everyday reality of the homes. TPiC care homes are clearly warm positive places to live, but many of the people in them have complex health

needs or are near end of life. For artists new to this setting – particularly where they had personal links to this age group – this could be hard. This also affected the tone of the project, making it more emotionally engaged – and thus probably higher in quality and greater in terms of professional development, as well as more challenging to work on.

# Future developments

**Reflecting on the evaluation and lessons learned from Our Place, we propose the following future developments for Suffolk Artlink's work with care homes**

## **Working with residential homes**

To maintain a whole home approach to the project, aiming to reach all areas of the homes and all staff

To have confidence in scheduling a project early on in order to recruit artists who are both expert and available, also to cluster delivery more tightly in order to maintain momentum and understanding of project aims

To ensure the ideas / aims of the project are communicated to all care home staff by attending staff and family / carers meetings

To improve on the Discovery Tool, making it a more creative process and maintaining the aim of creating a brief for each home that includes all stakeholders in the process

Creative Champions should be self-selected and identified early on in the project to be part of the discovery process in each home, also to contribute to artists planning sessions at the homes and post-project review and reflection sessions

To ensure commitment at all levels from partner organisations to the aims and ethos of the project, therefore contributing to better communication to staff, availability of Creative Champions and support for the residencies

## **Working with artists**

To keep the artists residency model and pairing of artists using different artforms working together

To give more opportunities to artists to shadow / observe the homes prior to planning their residency

To give artists more support from the Creative Mentor – through visits to residencies and via phone / skype

## **Project evaluation**

To develop the discovery tool and evaluation framework in a workshop format

To include robust recording of observations by project staff and observation / reflections from Creative Champions