

INFORMATION, QUOTES AND EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF 'MEMORY LANE'

November 2015

Theme 1- Improving health and wellbeing

Priority- Provide opportunities to improve residents' health and wellbeing through music, sport and cultural activities for older residents

Activity 1- Arts for Dementia trial

Overview

A series of 10 sessions at Mayfields, Boston, increasing participation and access to the arts for people with dementia and their carers and providing an opportunity to make new friends and learn new skills.

Implementation

10 x 2 hour sessions have been scheduled for twice a month; the 2nd and 4th Wednesday. The decision to hold fortnightly as opposed to weekly was made following consultation with potential service users. The sessions commenced on the 9th September and will continue to run until the 10th February.

Sessions are held at Mayfields, Broadfield Lane, again following feedback from service users that they would like a relatively central location with free parking. This venue was also suitable as it is within the Big Local area and so would attract beneficiaries from the immediate area.

The artist produced a provisional timetable of activities for the sessions. This has since evolved in collaboration with the participants in order to cater for their hobbies, interests and existing skills.

The name Memory Lane was given, firstly to avoid labelling the particular user group and secondly so that sessions were not restricted to art related activities if they were able to attract future funding to grow and expand.

The poster pictured was produced to market the session. This was featured in the Boston Bulletin, distributed to the Health and Wellbeing Network, Dementia Action Alliance, Dementia Support Network, existing support groups and GP surgeries. It was also displayed



in community venues such as the council offices, The Len Medlock Centre and supermarkets.

To demonstrate their support to the project, Boston Mayflower have provided an additional member of support staff for the sessions as a contribution in kind. This has proved to be really useful to allow more one-to-one support for attendees that initially needed a little more encouragement and support.

Outcomes

Stats:

On average 10 people attend the sessions, 3 men and 7 women, ranging in terms of ability and stage of the disease.

The table below shows that 6 of the participants are residents of the Boston Big Local catchment area, 2 are just outside of the border and the remaining 2 from a nearby village.

Street Name	Number of attendees	BBL area
Brady Street	3	✓
Broadfield Lane	1	✓
Wyberton Road	2	
Rosebury Avenue	2	
Sleaford Road	1	✓
Manor Gardens	1	✓

The group comprises of both people with dementia and carers, with an age range of 56 to 84. A young carer also occasionally attends with her grandmother.

Impact:

Included in the appendix is an overview of the impact of the sessions as described by the artist. The sessions are helping to reduce rural and social isolation, offering sensory stimulation to provoke vital memories, increasing self-esteem and helping participants to foster a stronger sense of identity and are stimulating memories; thus delaying the progression of the dementia.

Whilst the number of beneficiaries may seem small, the impact that the sessions are having on the participants is paramount. One carer explained that the sessions act as a safe haven and a chance to temporarily escape from a very challenging everyday life.

One participant in particular struggles with her conventional communication skills. During the first session she was withdrawn from the rest of the group and did not wish to participate in the activities. She often arrives at the sessions clearly feeling annoyed and

frustrated about her everyday struggles. With support this lady is now willingly participating and communicating with the group and leaves each session feeling much calmer. At the last session she said "I'm always happy when I'm here".

A couple of the carers have said that the sessions have given them transferrable skills that they are able to use with their loved ones once they are back home. One of the gentleman had previously been a tradesman. The sessions have given him the confidence to go back out to his shed and get creative again.

Having attended and benefitted from the sessions, a carer felt compelled to give something back to the community. She has since joined the Boston Dementia Action Alliance as a carer representative to contribute to the overall aspiration of Boston gaining the Dementia Friendly Community recognition.

A carer from the group is considering forming her own informal carers support group as a spin off to the Memory Lane sessions, a fantastic potential legacy of the project.

Photos from the sessions can be seen overleaf. Carol Parker, the artist helping to deliver the sessions, has also been keeping a blog relating to memory lane. The blog provides an overview of each of the sessions and can be found at the following link:

[\(https://artrovings.wordpress.com/making-for-memory-art-for-those-with-early-stage-dementia/\)](https://artrovings.wordpress.com/making-for-memory-art-for-those-with-early-stage-dementia/).

Although this is not of direct benefit to the residents of Boston, the success of these sessions has been highlighted by other districts thus leading to replication of the project in South Holland and South Kesteven. This is a great achievement and positive for Boston in that we have led the way.

Direct quotes from participants:

"It's brilliant, very relaxing and enjoyable"

"I think that these sessions are brilliant for getting us to forget our worries and problems for a while and inspire us to try new things, or re-start long forgotten hobbies"

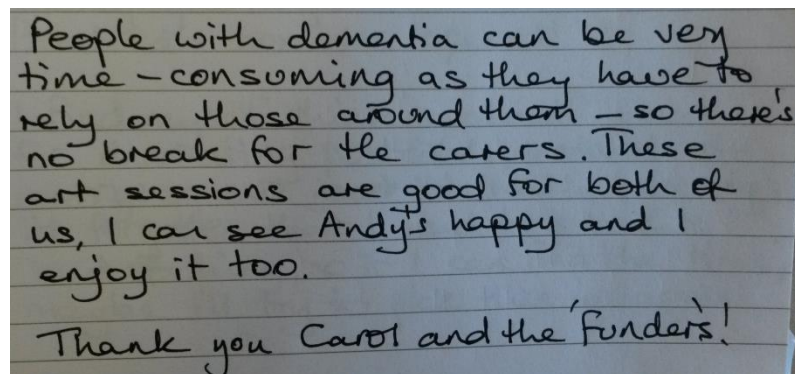
"Caring for your partner is a full time job, as you're constantly having to plan or foresee pitfalls. For two whole hours we are free and happy!"

"I got a bit emotional at the end. I realised that for two hours, I hadn't once thought of the stresses and strains at home, sorting out A's benefits & pensions, giving him his medication etc. So even though he was with me, it felt like 'me' time- although we both enjoyed it together"

"Now I can make felt, what else am I capable of achieving? I feel so proud of myself. I think my confidence is coming back"

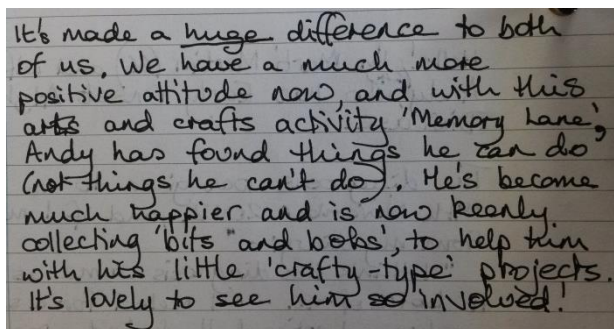
"I am the carer for my husband who has Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease. He is only 64 and has been struggling for the last 5 years, getting more depressed. This sort of activity is great as he can't do many of the things he used to enjoy. He said afterwards that he'd really enjoyed himself"

One of the carers has been keeping a journal throughout the sessions, including the following entries:

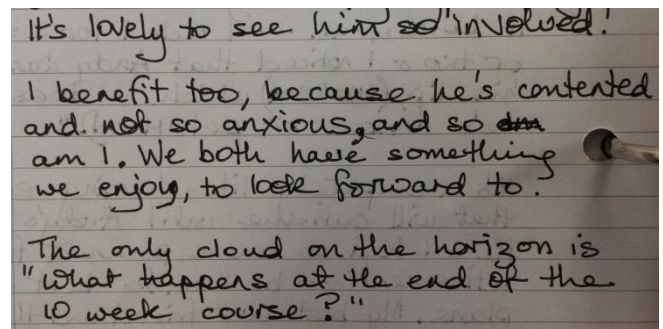


People with dementia can be very time-consuming as they have to rely on those around them - so there's no break for the carers. These art sessions are good for both of us, I can see Andy's happy and I enjoy it too.

Thank you Carol and the 'Funders'!



It's made a huge difference to both of us. We have a much more positive attitude now, and with this arts and crafts activity 'Memory Lane', Andy has found things he can do (not things he can't do). He's become much happier and is now keenly collecting 'bits' and 'bobs', to help him with his little 'crafty-type' projects. It's lovely to see him so involved!



It's lovely to see him so involved! I benefit too, because he's contented and not so anxious, and so ~~am~~ am I. We both have something we enjoy, to look forward to.

The only cloud on the horizon is "what happens at the end of the 10 week course?"

Appendix

Impacts of the Memory Lane sessions, as described by artist Carol Parker:

Reduce rural and social isolation

- Memory Lane provides a regular opportunity to meet others
- The venue is accessible: free parking, town centre space, on bus route, in BBL area
- Refreshments are available and provide a time for social interaction
- The venue is situated in an area where there are other care homes and sheltered housing giving the opportunity for increasing size of group
- Sessions take place on opposite weeks to the Dementia café providing another activity to take part in during the week

Offers sensory stimulation and encourages playfulness

- Tactile activities are popular eg felt, clay and encourage both verbal and non-verbal communication - some members who are otherwise very talkative, become totally absorbed in their work while others who are more reserved are stimulated to interact
- The sessions concentrate on enjoyment of making; all art forms are introduced at an accessible level with support available but with encouragement to extend and challenge skills eg. members were invited to alter and stitch a postcard to be included in the artist's project when it travels to Dorset for an exhibition in 2016
- We laugh together and play together, 'Mindfulness'
- The sessions are proving just as important for the carer of the person with dementia, if not more so. One carer is considering setting up a 'carers group' to come together in their own homes

Increases self-esteem and fosters a stronger sense of identity

- The creative sessions enable members to have control and give the opportunity for free choice preserving sense of identity and building self-confidence
- One member who was previously an engineer, was encouraged to carve hollows in a block of wood to display the felt stones created by the group. His carer (wife) said she would like to encourage him to work more in his shed.....he asked me to please give him more to do! The skills previously learnt are still there
- Valuing and respecting each individual's opinion – eg. when discussing the next session's activity, the group decided they would like to continue with clay for one more session instead, the programme was changed accordingly
- Be patient, participants may not join in straightaway, let them find their own pace – eg. one member was initially reluctant to join in the activity; the group included her in conversation while she observed, at the second session she joined in
- Spontaneous storytelling occurred during the collage activity as participants added images to their work

Delays the onset of Dementia and stimulates memory

- During coffee, members looked through the memory box and discussed the way a piece of material had been made; they were unsure of the name so I used my iPad to prompt with images and suggestions
- One member recalled playing with Plasticine at school when handling clay

Quotes:

'it's so good to play!' said a participant following the felt session

'this (while working with clay) reminds me of using Plasticine at school'

'yet again....not sure where the time's gone' said by carer following the collage session

'I have dementia, but I'm still me!'

'ah that's it...I remember!' when I showed the group images of 'tattooing' on my iPad after a conversation inspired by a piece of fabric in the memory box

Carol Parker socially engaged artist

24.11.15

Photos from Session 1:



Ongoing sessions:



