

## **Bournemouth University Final Evaluation Report Summary for Parkinson's Dance, Memory Art and Art for Parents Project. May 2021.**

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### *Outline of the evaluation work:*

Evaluation of three arts activities (dance for people experiencing Parkinson's, art for people with mild to moderate memory loss and art for parents experiencing different challenges) was undertaken. The overall task was to provide insights into whether the intended outcomes of the arts activities were achieved. A participatory approach to the evaluation was adopted and the evaluation took place over four years. This report provides detail of each of the activities, what was evaluated, how relevant information was gained from participants and the findings. The findings not only indicated that the activities were successful, they also provided insights into the secrets of success for others who may wish to establish similar projects in the future. Please see below for more detail of each element of the project, the evaluation and the findings. NB: Many thanks to Pixabay for use of free images.

# Parkinson's Dance

## The Aim and intended outcome of the ArtsLink Fizz! Parkinson's Dance Project

As identified by ArtsLink Fizz! the aim was to reduce identified barriers people with Parkinson's (PwP) face, help them manage their conditions and improve their lives and prospects. The intended outcome was for people with Parkinson's to improve knowledge of their body movement, gaining confidence to apply this knowledge to support their movement.

### How was the aim and outcome to be achieved?

As identified by ArtsLink Fizz! the aim was to be achieved through provision of People with Parkinson's and their carers year-round movement sessions to support PwP in improving their balance, coordination and suppleness as well as their confidence. The sessions were also designed to offer a socialising opportunity for all attendees, creating a support framework.

Was the aim and outcome achieved? **Yes!** Through the *many possibilities* created for the people who attended.

"It (Parkinson's) doesn't need to constrain you. There are things I can't do and one accepts it but I am much more open to the possibility of doing something" A comment from a dancer.

"I cannot express what a wonderful and vibrant group this is ... this group does more than bring people together. It gives us all a feeling of being alive, laughter and caring" A comment from a dance partner.



"It's like a party!"  
Comment from a dance partner

"People feel why it helps"  
Comment from a dance teacher



### How do we know that the aim and outcome was achieved?

By looking at the numbers of people attending, by using a participatory approach, joining in, talking to the dance teachers and asking the people who came to the sessions about what they thought. A researcher also shared a poem and video of her experiences to check with participants that these matched.



**The dancing and socialising opportunities created possibilities for the people with Parkinson's and the rest of the dancing community to:**

Experience feelings of wellbeing, dance and sing, do new something new, exercise with others, feel included, connect with others, have fun and laugh, have social time with partners, feel enjoyment and happiness, let themselves go, have something to do and look forward to, be creative and play, share resources with others about Parkinson's, celebrate with others, feel graceful, relax, feel encouraged, feel supported, feel motivated, feel the same and in it together, recollect and feel music and dance memories.

**The dancing and socialising opportunities created possibilities for the people with Parkinson's who attended to:**

Gain confidence with movement short and long term and depending on the day, maintain and/or improve movement, improve balance and suppleness and coordination, learn strategies from teachers and others, move without thinking, surprise self (and others) with movement, be open to other new things, have structure to the week, be more confident socially, feel freer physically and mentally, do what you can in the sessions, help one's self, move more without aids, use the learning at home, 'push symptoms back'.

"Staff and helpers go out of their way to accommodate all ages and physical abilities. Every person is a somebody and not a number... The sessions allow all to be involved ... for example those who are unable to stand are still very much part of the dance and nobody is excluded".

*A comment from a dance partner*



**Secrets of Success**

Dance teachers especially trained in the Parkinson's Dance Science model who make the sessions inclusive with movement options for people with different abilities.

Dance teachers creating rapport and fun, being trusted, helpful, enthusiastic and humorous.

Dance teachers helping learning by giving instructions, tips, reasons for actions and feedback to the people in the group.

Teachers being energetic and working together.

The choreography and teachers helping people to use their imagination.

Using props such as pom-poms, roses and scarves to create fun and show synchronised movement and coordination of the group.

People choosing their level of activity according to how they feel on the day.

The fun nature of the group and activities so that individuals can 'let themselves go'.

The atmosphere of cohesion, camaraderie, community and acceptance amongst a group of 'regulars'.

Teatime and time to socialise after the dancing.

The music – enjoyable and stimulating people to move through its rhythm and beat. The music contributes to feelings of fun and happiness.

Repetition of actions in the dance classes builds confidence in movement and movement without thinking.

The availability of chairs with arms for dancers who need the arms to help them with sitting and standing.

# Memory Art



## The Aim and intended outcome of the ArtsLink Fizz! Memory Art Project

As identified by ArtsLink Fizz! the aim of this project was to reduce identified barriers people with mild to moderate memory loss face, help them manage their conditions and improve their lives and prospects. The intended outcome was for people with memory loss to be less isolated and gain confidence through regular participation in creative activities.

### How was the aim and outcome to be achieved?

As identified by ArtsLink Fizz! the aim was to be achieved through cognitive stimulation activities and these were in the form of weekly art and craft sessions.

### Was the aim and outcome achieved? **Yes!**

The art and craft opportunities *created many possibilities* for the people who attended.

“It made me realise I can still do things that I thought I couldn’t do. It just pushes you”.

“ Overall it’s a wellbeing thing as well. You feel better when you’ve been. Mood enhancing is a really important part – it isn’t just concerned with memory issues. It is social in a very gentle environment as well. Other situations can be intimidating if there is too much excitement”.

A comment from one of the artists who attended the sessions.



### How do we know that the aim and outcome was achieved?

By looking at attendance data as well as using a participatory approach, joining in, talking to the art teachers and asking the people who came to the sessions about what they thought.



### Secrets of success

Facilitative teachers offering activities and flexibility according to artists' circumstances on the day, their abilities and preferences. Teacher understanding and anticipation of participants' needs, giving help at the right time.

The group size allowing artists timely assistance when needed and group interaction around the table.

Fun and art activities that stimulate ideas and imagination offering new and different things to do with unexpected activities and outcomes.

A non-judgmental, inclusive, calm atmosphere where interaction or silence happens naturally.

### The Memory Art session opportunities created possibilities for artists to:

Experience feelings of wellbeing, be inspired and pass on skills, be creative, connect through art, have something to do, have something to look forward to, have something to enjoy, have something to get engrossed in, have fun, laugh and relax, experience social life and new friendships, be encouraged, feel supported, learn, feel included, experience independence and personal time, develop/recover confidence, work in silence or to chat, experience a sense of achievement, experience stimulation of thought, get ideas from others' work (not just teachers), improve concentration, have a haven.



“ It wakes you up!  
...It's something different. It's good for the brain and you (referring to the researcher) can say that! ”

### Secrets of success

Provision of resources including transport, a personal sketchbook, teacher tips and resources to enable artwork at home.

A focus on art and peoples' strengths rather than memory issues.

People interacting and engaging to the extent they wish (from just sitting quietly and watching and listening to joining in activities fully).

Time for the group dynamic to develop.

Use of art to communicate with others and engage with the wider community including the researcher.

Storytelling happening naturally, enabling listening, laughing and engaging with others.

# Art for Parents



## The Aim and intended outcome of the ArtsLink Fizz! Art for Parents Project

As identified by ArtsLink Fizz! the aim of this project was to reduce identified barriers parents with primary school aged children experiencing challenges face and to help them manage their lives and prospects. The intended outcome was for parents to be less isolated and have improved coping strategies as a result of participation in social, art and craft activities.

### How was the aim and outcome to be achieved?

Through weekly art and craft sessions in a safe, supportive environment.

### Was the aim and outcome achieved? **Yes!**

The art and craft opportunities *created many possibilities for the people who attended.*

“You’re just doing something for yourself”

“We need to connect and it (*coming to the group*) is an excuse to do that”.

“It brings home to prioritise yourself more for the benefit of all”.

A comment from one of the artists who attended the sessions.



“This is like a sunny day ... there is a lightness ... You stop thinking ... It’s therapeutic”.

A comment from an artist

### How do we know that the aim and outcome was achieved?

By looking at attendance data as well as using a participatory approach, joining in and asking the people who came to the sessions about what they thought. Participants also presented their views through a creative project.



### Secrets of Success

Facilitative teachers - role models who create a welcoming inclusive place to be. They are non-judgmental, understanding, willing to listen and easy to talk to, supportive, empathetic and encouraging.

The group sessions being for adults only.

Sessions being easy to join in with because they are set up and facilitated.

Members can be accompanied if they wish.

Sessions being seen by participants as worthwhile to attend (they have competing pressures).

The atmosphere being non-judgmental, respectful and the group having ground rules. No 'us and them' in terms of the teacher and researcher relationships with group members.

### The Art for Parent session opportunities created possibilities for artists to:

Experience feelings of wellbeing, be inspired, be creative, connect through art, have something to look forward to, have something to enjoy, have fun, laugh and relax, experience social life and new friendships, feel supported, learn, experience personal time, develop/recover confidence, work in silence or to chat, experience a sense of achievement, have a haven, feel included, pass on skills to others, develop social skills and resilience, feel 'in the same boat' as others, talk with adult peers, have time to thrive, have a place to go as a coping strategy.



“We’re a family not a group!”

“It makes you part of the community”.

### Secrets of Success

The sharing of cake contributing to a warm and nurturing environment.

The provision of resources including the sessions being free of charge and members being given a personal art journal for themselves.

The regularity and timing of the sessions (weekly 9.30 - 11.30am). Ideally the sessions would be continuous (not just in term time) because it can be hard for people to come back after a break.

Use of art as a means of communication with others for example family, friends and others in the wider community via the summer celebration events.

The summer celebration event as confidence booster because group members see their achievements on display for others to look at.