

# Caring in a Changing World Conference. The 4th International NCCS & EACS Conference

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### Theme: Caring in the Community

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## Creation of community arts activities for health and wellbeing: learning from an evaluation study

### Background

Caring is occurring in new ways, for example through ‘social prescription’ in the UK (Costa et al. 2021) and Internationally (Islam 2020). The aim of social prescribing is to enable people with long term conditions to participate in non-clinical community activities to help improve their health and wellbeing (Husk et al. 2020).

Socially prescribed activities are not necessarily delivered by health care practitioners (Pesheny et al. 2018).

Learning from evaluation of three successful community arts activities, offers insights applicable to the design and delivery of art activities in the social prescription care context.



## The Study

### *Purpose*

Independent evaluation commissioned by an Arts charity in the UK. The arts project and evaluation was funded by the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

### *Aim*

To evaluate three community arts activities designed to assist identified groups of potentially vulnerable people to manage their circumstances and improve their lives and prospects.

### *Activities evaluated*

Dance for people with Parkinson's  
Art sessions for people experiencing mild to moderate memory loss  
Art sessions for parents experiencing challenges

The art activities were delivered by qualified and experienced dance and art teachers

### *Ethics*

Ethical approval for the study was granted by Bournemouth University. ID numbers: 17158, 21464 & 21462

A faint, stylized illustration of two hands, one on the left and one on the right, holding a globe. The hands are rendered in a light gray color with white outlines for the fingers and palm. The globe is positioned in the center, between the two hands.

## Methods

A participatory approach which included qualitative methods of semi-structured interviewing and researcher participant observation. Data were collected across the projects from group members engaging in the art activities, people accompanying them, artists facilitating sessions (teachers) and volunteer assistants. Data analysis was guided by the thematic approach of Braun and Clarke (2006).

## Results

Preliminary analysis of data across the three art projects suggests that the qualities of the teachers and the environments they created were common to their success.

### *The qualities of the teachers:*

They cared about the  
people in the groups  
&  
were perceived to be good  
teachers

### *The environments the teachers created were:*

Inclusive  
Non-judgemental  
Creative, fun and playful  
Relaxing

## The Qualities of the Teachers

“It’s very caring and attentive and they don’t miss anything. These teachers don’t miss anything.”  
(Volunteer)

“The glue that sticks us all together.”  
(Art for Parents participant)

### Understanding, easy to talk to, empathic and non-judgmental:

“she’s understanding, she’s willing to listen and easy to talk to, she’s supportive ... she doesn’t judge.”  
(Art for Parents Participant)

### Trustworthy:

“I’m impressed with the way they (*the teachers*) monitor and keep an eye on people - the less able - they (*the teachers*) are very good.”  
(Dance Participant)

### Wholehearted in their roles:

“You have to be OTT (over the top) and bubbly.” (Teacher)  
“... The teacher said that she feels she is performing.”  
(Notes from researcher discussion with a teacher)



**Facilitative:**

“They give you the reason for doing it (the movement) ... quite often telling you how, walking backwards, toe - heel, the reason for doing things in a certain way ... ‘nd um and I can try and use that in other areas.”

(Dance participant)

**Motivating and inspiring:**

“Well it’s out of my comfort zone so I’ve never done arts and crafts, so it’s got me interested.”

(Art for Parents participant)

**Responsible in their roles and they recognised group members’ needs:**

“Carers are entrusting their loved ones and are confident they are safe and happy, it’s more than just the art.”

(Teacher)

**Attentive and knew when help was needed:**

“What (*group member*) thought was good was that the teacher knew when people needed help – she said she was ‘a proper teacher in my opinion’.”

(Notes from researcher discussion with a participant in the Memory Art)

*The environments the teachers created were:*

**Inclusive (socially and in terms of activities provided):**

“... A welcoming atmosphere. People are included ... the teachers are key to all of that.”

(Dance volunteer)

“You can put in as much as you like.”

(Dance participant)

**Non-judgemental:**

“...no us and them.”

(Art for Parents participant)

**Creative, fun and playful:**

“a laugh, fun and creative.”

(Art for Parents participant)

**Relaxing:**

“I find it really relaxing and it goes so quickly because you get absorbed in what you are doing. I find it relaxing and calm.”

(Memory Art participant)



## Conclusions

The qualities of teachers and the environments they created contributed to the success of three community arts-based activities designed for potentially vulnerable groups of people. Teachers cared about the people in their groups, they were perceived to be good teachers and the environments they created were found to be inclusive, creative, fun, playful and relaxing.

## Implications for caring in a changing world

Learning from this study offers insight into factors leading to successful community arts-based activities for health and wellbeing, which may help to inform the design and delivery of arts activities in the social prescription care context.



## References

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