

Making a Difference Hall of Fame

Supporting carer wellbeing

Partner organisations worked together to provide Arts therapies taster days for carers and families



The Challenge

The creative arts are increasingly recognised as a source of wellbeing. Arts therapies use art, drama, music and dance/ movement in a therapeutic way in hospital and community settings. Benefits can range from developing confidence and self esteem to more complex psychotherapeutic interventions.

Previous research has identified the potential for enhancing carer wellbeing through arts therapies (Weatherup, 2008).

Carers are often an undervalued group and while caring for someone can be rewarding it can also take a toll on the carer's health and wellbeing. Carers' needs can go unacknowledged and carers' rarely demand access to psychological therapies.

The community arts therapies project developed the idea of

providing arts therapies taster days for carers to test whether engaging in arts therapies could benefit wellbeing by being both healing and restorative. In doing so this fits with a key theme in Department of Health policy.

Wellbeing: A positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment (No Health without Mental Health, 2011)

What we did

We organised a series of seven arts therapies taster days and a family day in community and arts environments. Taster events were aimed at adult and young carers. Taster days were hospitable and nurturing opportunities to be creative and meet other carers and families.

We provided transport, lunch, materials and equipment such as musical instruments.

Key learning

- Thorough planning must include arts therapists and carers
- Be grounded in carers' needs
- Emphasize the light-hearted elements to provide meaning and be welcoming
- Offering a family day is the most inclusive and popular model of arts therapies tasters
- Multiple arts therapies provide a range of opportunities
- Work with existing carers groups is helpful
- Reflective practice sessions help therapists learn from each other and adapt their practice
- Keep evaluation manageable-participatory video is helpful

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We recruited a part time administrator and 15 therapists. Carers were involved in the steering group, planning events from the beginning.

We evaluated the days using participatory video, the evaluation tree tool and through reflective practice sessions. Overall 82 people participated.

Funds were secured from the Hedley Foundation, Awards for All and AWP.

Who was involved

Lisa Otter Barry	Music Therapist, Soundwell Music Therapy Trust
Lou Curtis Lu Duhig	Modern Matron, AWP Carer Engagement Manager, AWP
Andrew Evans Sonia Hutchinson Paul German	Service Manager, Rethink Carer / Manager, Off the Record Service Manager, Rethink
Sarah Parkinson Gina Smith	Art Psychotherapist, AWP Consultant Nurse and Clinical Lead for Carers, AWP
Emma Weatherup	Music Therapist, Soundwell Music Therapy Trust
Fiona Williams	Art Psychotherapist, Adult Services, AWP

What difference did it make

Participatory video helped us understand how carers' felt they benefitted from the taster days.

Carers' identified that companionship was important, meeting one another, becoming acquainted, playing together and feeling equal to one another. Another theme was liberation. This was time for them selves, for self expression, to make a mess, make some noise and have fun and freedom. For both therapists and participants there was an element of discovery, enjoying arts not previously experienced; this stimulated some carers to take up new hobbies as a result.

The participants reflected on how safe they felt, even when they explored feelings and emotions using the medium of the arts. There was a pleasure in working together, towards a common goal, mixing generations of people (ages 7-67) and types of arts therapies.

Taster days were positively received.



Contact

For more information please contact

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