



**Arts and Minds**  
at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery  
Artstormproject

## **ARTS & HEALTH SOUTH WEST PRIZE 2015 LONGLISTED CASE STUDY**



**Name of organisation:**  
Artstormproject

**Title of project/programme:**  
Arts and Minds at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

**Dates of project/programme:**  
April 2014- April 2015

**Summary:**

Artstormproject was commissioned by Plymouth City Council's Arts and Heritage Service to run an exciting pilot art based project in February 2014. The project is called 'Arts and Minds', and ran at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery for one year. It provided creative opportunities for isolated people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. The project was designed to involve a number of key partners to deliver a year's programme of artistic activity, based at the city museum for a small group of self-selected participants. Artstormproject Artists were chosen through an application process because of their ability to collaborate creatively, and the diversity of their creative skills; ceramics, painting, textiles, fashion reminiscence, printmaking and sculpture. The varied and extensive Arts and Heritage Collections from the City Museum underpinned the creative work. Artstorm Artists with the Museum Staff worked together to bring this valuable resource to the group, using it for a starting point for creativity and reminiscence. Memory Matters were commissioned to evaluate the impact of the work and to provide dementia training and awareness with Arts4Dementia for the Museum Staff, Artists and Volunteers involved in the project.

## Overview:

As part of Adult Social Care's on-going contribution towards improving dementia services within the city, Plymouth City Council's Arts and Heritage Service were commissioned to lead an exciting art based project providing creative opportunities for isolated people with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Currently, there are 800,000 people with dementia in the UK. In Plymouth this figure is estimated to be about 3,000. Of this, according to statistics from the Alzheimer's Society, roughly two thirds of people with dementia continue to live in the community and one third in care homes. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests offering people with dementia opportunities to engage in creative activity can play a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing communication, and reinforcing identity. It also presents a valuable opportunity to bring people together socially to develop new skills or improve existing ones. The aims of Plymouth City Council Arts and Heritage Service for the Arts and Minds project were to:

- Test the value of creative interventions inspired by Plymouth's Arts and Heritage collections as a means of support for isolated older people with mild/moderate dementia and their carers.
- Evaluate thoroughly the impact of this work and understand how as a city, Plymouth can improve its' cultural offer to people with dementia.
- Increase access to great art for everyone.
- Make important and wide reaching contribution to Plymouth's Dementia Friendly aspirations.
- Tackle the isolation of elderly and vulnerable adults living in Plymouth.
- Engage and train a pool of professional artists to become experts in providing arts and cultural based activities for people with mild/moderate dementia.
- In line with Plymouth City Museum's role as an Arts Council Partner Museum, ensure that not only is there a lasting legacy to this work locally, but that information is disseminated to the widest possible regional and national audience.

The aims of Artstormproject for the Arts and Minds project were to:

- Provide a full sensory experience through the diversity of different art practices using the Museum's collections as a starting point.
- Provide informal, relaxed fun sessions to create an environment that invites individuals to share and to reminisce as part of the creative process.
- Experience discovery and rediscovery that reaffirms the self and a sense of identity through the group's enjoyment of the creative process.
- Encouraging trying out new skills or honing old ones.

Artstormproject Artists are James Hedge, Jess Carvill, Lucy Rockliffe and Anthea Nakorn. Each Artist drew on the different museum collections linked directly to their individual practice. For example Lucy Rockliffe, who is a ceramic artist, looked at the Wallace Brothers' Ceramic Bird collection with the group to create their own interpretations of the birds in clay, which later went on to be exhibited alongside the collection. James Hedge specialises in painting and took the group on a journey of portraiture and landscape painting following the gallery exhibitions. Anthea Nakorn was able to access the handling collections, particularly fashion, for reminiscence and drawing and created a wall hanging. Jess Carvill introduced the group to many different processes such as felt making, print making, mosaics to create artworks inspired by the natural history collections or world cultures. The Artists took turns over the year in running four to five sessions at a time, the last of each block crossing

over with another artist to link themes and provide continuity. A journal has been kept for the purpose of evaluation noting comments, how individuals have responded and what activity the group has been doing.

Outputs and legacy for Arts and Minds project are:

- Conference in Plymouth Creation of a regular activity programme for people living with Dementia based on PCMAG
- A pool of local professionally trained artists specialising in working with people living with dementia.
- A comprehensive evaluation report.

To achieve these aims and outputs for the Arts and Minds project, key partners have been working together. Memory Matters with arts4dementia and with the Plymouth Alzheimer's society gave initial dementia and awareness training for all those involved including volunteer helpers. The training helped inform the Artists in their delivery of art activities. Memory Matters were commissioned to evaluate the project and have already done a half way report. Other project partners include Plymouth AgeUK and PDAA (Plymouth Dementia, Action Alliance), Arts for Health Cornwall and Plymouth University. In addition Plymouth City Museum Arts and Heritage staff, Julia Beazer and Joanne Gray worked continually with Artstormproject to access museum handling collections and support the group sessions.

### **Innovation:**

The Arts and Minds project is innovative in a variety of ways: It offers a pilot project working in new ways with the City of Plymouth providing creative opportunities for people with dementia and their carers with many key partners: a different way of exploring the potential of the City Museum's space and collections. Traditionally Museums have been linked with learning (school groups etc) but Arts and Minds way of working is about offering experiences that will reawaken knowledge and memories through the arts, improving the participants' health and wellbeing, bringing together artists with vulnerable groups in an inspiring environment. The artists have been able to offer a full sensory experience through group enjoyment of the exhibitions, access to the handling collections from departments triggering memories, conversation and discussion with the Artists working together through collaboration, fusing their skills to deliver a unique and exciting programme of art activities.

### **Participation:**

Arts and Minds project was available to a self-selected group of people with mild to moderate dementia and their carers; sixteen people in total. The Museum advertised the art project throughout the city and through local groups likely to be accessed by people with dementia. Those who responded were excited about the prospect of reawakening old skills and developing new ones. The project was designed to ensure that all the activities were equally available to both carers and those with dementia. An important aspect of the participation was to find ways to share positive experiences in an enjoyable supportive environment. Each week the group arrive at 2.00 on a Tuesday afternoon. The sessions are very relaxed and the artist introduces the theme or activity for the session. The group might go to one of the galleries looking at specific exhibits or museum staff might bring items from the handling collections to support the art activity. The artists use very visual teaching techniques such as step by step informal demonstration, and keeping things simple. Volunteers help artists with tasks and support individuals in the group when they need help.

Different techniques, and materials have been introduced throughout the year including acrylic painting, pastels, weaving, collage, ceramics, printmaking, felt work and mosaics. Reminiscence, conversation and singing are all encouraged while working together.

### **Outcomes:**

The Plymouth City Arts and Heritage service have created a regular activity programme for people living with dementia based at PCMAG with dementia trained artists leading creative sessions. Work created by the group has been exhibited alongside the permanent collection in the Museum.

Memory Matters have compiled a Mid Year Evaluation (6 months), which indicates positive effects of the regular art sessions on the group. The Evaluation measurement techniques they used are as follows:

- ACE III Cognitive test (using ACE Mobile) tests to assess for changes in: Attention Memory Fluency Language Visuospatial recognition
- QoL AD Quality of life assessment for those living with dementia cost assessed outcomes and vital measurement.
- CADI Carers Assessment of Difficulties Index which assesses the difficulties carers face. The CADI will enable commissioners to see if the problems carers face are eased by attending weekly arts sessions.
- Questionnaire with questions about how they feel now, whether they have taken part in creative skills before, the impact of the Arts and Minds programme among others.
- Questionnaire based on National Accounts of Well Being (NEF) and The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University Diary for Artists and Volunteers

Contemporaneous notes were taken about the activity: who did not engage well, anecdotes from the session and any useful information about anyone getting distressed, being unable to understand the task, and on those who enjoyed it.

Some quotes from the mid-year evaluation report show the positive effects of the art sessions:

Do you feel your relationship with the person you care for has changed?

- "It has given us a shared interest"
- "We have become closer, being empowered by each other - it's a two way thing."

What do you feel you have achieved by coming to the group?

- "an appreciation of art and I am now more observant"
- "I now understand more about living with dementia, we are positive, there are so many negatives in the media regarding dementia"

Participants with dementia quotes:

- "We don't want to go home. We want to stay here, play some more. I love coming here"

- "I have started painting again"
- "This painting is helping me to remember - it's wonderful isn't it"
- "You don't know how much this helps me - I've been feeling really low recently and this has made me so happy"

With the evidence of the positive effects on the participants and the group wanting to continue to participate in the art sessions, the Arts and Heritage staff at the Museum are committed to finding new funding streams to extend the project. New funding has already been found to extend the project to the end of July 2015 as a result of the project linking and accessing high profile visiting exhibitions such as the Joshua Reynolds's Exhibition at the Museum (resulting in sessions based on portraiture).

### **Learning:**

Artists had to find new ways of working with a mixed group of people with dementia and their carers making sure all their needs were met, they had to be flexible and be able to adapt the activity to the group in the sessions when things did not seem to be working well, being sensitive to the individuals strengths and weakness. Art projects and activities had to be designed not to be distressing for those with memory loss so that they lost their way, but to be stimulating and challenging enough for creativity and exploration for all in the group. Props and reminders were used, photographs of individuals making, or painting the previous week as reminders and lots of group support. The artists, staff and volunteers were continually learning from the group, changing and planning new activities based on previous session experiences.

### **Critical success factors:**

Advanced planning by Plymouth City Council Heritage Service, namely Julia Beazer and Joanne Gray based at the City's Museum, were pivotal to the success of Arts and Minds project, with follow up support to artists and the group throughout the year. They also provided easy access and information to the museum's collections for the creative activities. This enabled the Artstormproject artists to offer their unique varied combination of art skills relating to the museum collections to the art sessions. Other critical factors include having weekly held sessions, same place, seating arrangement, reliable team work, with familiar faces and excellent volunteers. Above all positive attitudes and enthusiasm intent on success have made a real difference to how well the group bonded, despite some complications along the way. The success of the project was reflected in the excellent attendance and the evident shared enjoyment of the group greeting each new creative challenge with interest and enthusiasm.

### **Funding and Resources:**

The Arts and Minds project was commissioned and funded by Plymouth City Council, Arts and Heritage Service on behalf of Adult Social Care. The set fee for artists was £6200 based on weekly sessions @£100 for an artist with paid training sessions and extra materials budget from the museum. Additional funding has been found through the museum for 3 more months based on Arts and Minds engaging with the visiting Reynolds's exhibition.

## Images L-R

- **Title:** Landscape painting with Arts and Minds group  
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- **Title:** Fashion Reminiscence and drawing  
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- **Title:** Painting onto ceramic relief plate  
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