

Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations



Evaluation Report

Written for The Grange Day Centre
By Infinite Arts, 2011


Community Foundation
serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland



Evaluation Report

written and compiled by Infinite Arts,

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1 Introduction

The Purpose of this Evaluation

This Evaluation Report has been produced in order to;

- influence future projects and practice
- inform project development and review both during and after the project
- value the thoughts and feelings of the participants
- provide information to funders,

The purpose of this report is to make recommendations, which can be carried forward into future project development by The Grange, the artists and the other partners. This information may also be useful to managers of other centres who wish to learn from the experience of the project at the discretion of The Grange.

Infinite Arts have been involved in the evaluation of the Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations project since the outset beginning with a meeting between the Grange Day Centre manager and the evaluator. The initial meeting was followed by visits to a number of the sessions to meet the artists and participants to explain the process of evaluation and to assess the style and process of the sessions. Evaluation questionnaires were produced in order to gather feedback, using different questions for the artists, staff and centre manager.

Feedback from the participants was gathered during visits from conversations with participants and staff. These visits also provided an opportunity to talk through the evaluation with the artist, to see at first hand how the project was progressing and talk to the artist and participants about the development of the project. The evaluator also attended a number of planning meetings involving centre staff, artists and partners. The project manager and the evaluator met and spoke on the phone regularly during the project so that the evaluator's findings could form a useful part of the ongoing process of development and review of the project.

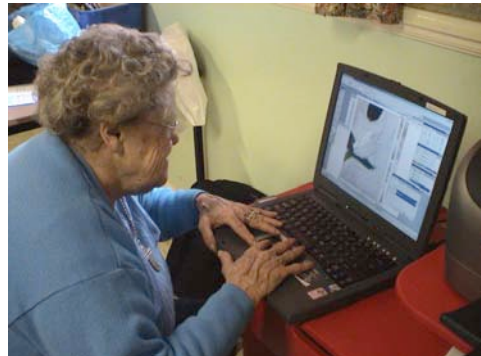
Background to The Grange Day Care Centre

Background to The Grange

The Grange Day Centre currently has over 100 service users all of whom are elders or third age.

The centre is very much part of the local community and the management committee reflects this, having two retired local business men, a Local Authority councillor and an Alderman (over retirement age), the local vicar and a further 2 people who have retired from their careers and wish to continue to give to their community. The centre is a registered charity

(No; 1058445) and provides individual day care to the residents of the outer west of Newcastle upon Tyne, through a contract with Newcastle Social Services Department. All people referred to the service have undergone an individual assessment of need and have been identified as needing day care support to prevent; social isolation, family



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breakdown, relapse of functional illness, or to offer support and respite for families/carers, to enable people to retain their independence and remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

Arts Development at The Grange

With the support of Kellett Fund, Northern Rock Foundation, Northern Arts and Newcastle City Council, The National Lottery through Awards for All the Grange has for more than ten years successfully undertaken a programme of arts development, which has continued into 2011, and has involved the direct participation of all service users. Staff at The Grange have recognised that the arts successfully bring people together and provide an opportunity for individuals to work together towards shared goals and an end product. They have found that arts projects act as a catalyst for confidence building through the realisation of new skills; ultimately creating an improved and more active quality of life. Over the last few years participants have had a chance to try a variety of artforms and activities including stained glass, ceramics, storytelling, self portraits, woodcarving, silk painting, and digital art.

Funding

The Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations Project is financially supported by the Kellett Fund at Community Foundation.

Artists have included Sue Woolhouse, Annette Poulson, Celia Bryce, Sally Southern and Sharon Bailey. All participants are elders who use services at The Grange Day Centre, Newburn Road, Throckley, Newcastle upon Tyne. Other images of this and other projects can be viewed on their Web site www.grangearts.org.uk

2 The Project - a brief description

The arts successfully bring people together and provide opportunity for individuals to work together towards shared goals and end product. They act as a catalyst for confidence building through the realisation of new skills or improved past and present skills; this ultimately creates a more improved and active quality of life.

The aims of the project

This project aimed to provide meaningful art activities that promote social inclusion and help identify and celebrate existing and new skills of elders who use The Grange Day Centre and : -

- To help identify and celebrate existing and new skills
- To increase the feelings of self-worth/esteem and self-confidence of individuals
- To help fight disuse (both mental and physical)
- To encourage active participation in the arts
- To raise older peoples public profile

The project was aimed at further challenging service users' perceptions of their own abilities and continuing to challenge the perceptions of elders' worth and abilities within the wider community.

Staff at the Grange commit to carrying out the aims by:

- Involving service users and other users of the centre in the planning and creation of all work undertaken

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- Creating close working relationships between service users and artists and introducing them to new artistic forms and mediums.
- Encouraging people to express themselves creatively.
- Ensuring a qualitative working process and end product.
- Publicly displaying all completed projects
- Engaging an external evaluator to determine the effectiveness of the project

Year 1 Steel and Glass Fabricated Fence

Artist: Sue Woolhouse

In Year 1 the service users at the Grange were able to extend their creative work to the outside of the building in the form of a specially fabricated steel fence. The project set out to develop this highly original sculptural work along the side of the Centre's exterior. This work was designed with the elders who use the Grange and included direct participation in making elements of the artwork. This initiative helped further share the art works, skills and aspirations of the participants with the wider community of Throckley and provide a permanent public work of art that has meaning and relevance to their lives. The Throckley area is regarded as 'socially excluded' and an area with pockets of 'high deprivation'. Sue Woolhouse, glass artist worked with service users and was responsible for including them in the overall design of the ironwork and the creation of the glass components to wrought iron fence. John Hayes made and fitted the work to the Centre. This phase has not been included in this evaluation.

Year 2 Ceramics

Artist: Annette Poulson

Following successful projects with ceramicist Jane Hufton in recent years, service users have indicated that they wished to continue with ceramics and to take on more challenging projects. Through previous projects people have demonstrated how much they enjoy the process of making one-off, personal items in ceramic, where they are involved from start to finish. Unfortunately, Jane moved out of the region, but a new ceramicist, Annette Poulson was engaged and has worked over a two year period with participants at the Grange.

Year 3 Textiles, photography and creative writing

Artists: Sally Southern, Sharon Bailey, Celia Bryce

In Year Three the Grange has introduced new artforms. A Textile Artist worked in collaboration with a Photographer and Creative Writer introducing the "Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations" theme to the elders and developing the project to incorporate a combination of Textiles, photography, words and stories. The project binds together all their personal thoughts and feelings about the 3-year project.

Service users worked with the three artists developing ideas initially through small scale work and then moving on to a more collaborative piece that will bring all service users ideas and art forms together to express the elders views around their Hopes Dreams and Aspirations.

3 Feedback from Year 2

Ceramics: with Annette Poulson

Annette Poulson is a ceramicist who worked with 60 people during the time of the project and in addition had conversations with people, others browsed the books, or watched participants at work. Annette felt that many people had taken part by showing and voicing their appreciation of the finished work of others.

Ongoing work is displayed so that people can see it easily on their way back from the lunch room and can chat to the artist about it should they wish. Projects were evolved based on the interests of an individual or a group. Each group project has run alongside a range of personal projects. Annette described several of the projects:

“Royal Family - group of modelled figures. This evolved from a small head that I made at the end of a session at the beginning of my time at the Grange. I asked people about the character of the head & more people were added to keep the first company. The project, lighthearted in nature involved 12 people. The group created a corgi and flunky in the entourage. Pat, a mainstay of the group, created several of the pieces.”

“Pets Project attracted approximately 16 people who maintained ‘hands on’ involvement. I noticed that people were keen to make models their pets, present or deceased and a large number of photos were kept in wallets or brought in for the purpose. The results were taken away leaving no trace within the centre of the love of pets that so many people shared. To make this visible would make possible present and future conversations about pets. I suggested that we make large tiles of clay to represent pets using techniques that made success easy for all. The pets were to be displayed on a wall visible from the main room and dining room. Norman brought a photo of his spaniel and made two tiles, one for the centre and one for home. Stories about pets came tumbling out, whether people took part in making tiles or not. I invited Celia Bryce, colleague and writer to record them and was so pleased when she agreed.

Dogs exclusively formed the subject of the first personal pet images to be created.



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People traced, drew, then create large, textured dog tiles using small pieces of wet clay. Thirteen images were created over a period of 12 months. Twelve people completed 13 tile dogs; interest then lapsed. Once they were finished and fixed to the outside wall, interest revived.

Several comments by members “Where are the cats?” has set the project off again. We are now adding cats, two Magpies and I envisage butterflies, plants and flowers to complete the scene. Who knows what!”

Personal ceramics projects.

“The Elephant. John Wood, having had a stroke that has severely impaired his speech and left him with one useful hand, decided that he would like to make a large model of an elephant. I showed him many pictures of elephants, both working and decorated, small and large and from these he chose one in particular as his inspiration. He rolled the clay coils and directed me in building the form. He checked it at every stage and smoothed it at the end of every session. He chose the glaze and applied it.



When I delivered the glazed elephant he beamed, kissed my hand and enjoyed the attention paid to his work. Next he wanted next to make a large lion but as the work with him was exclusive and intensive it was fair that I spent time with other people before returning to facilitate his imagined lion. This was a painful decision and a balance sometimes difficult to calculate.”

Personal tile murals involve skills of design, drawing and glazing.

“Edna works in a very personal painterly style. She wanted to make a map showing the coach trips that she and her husband took through Britain. As this was a ‘large’ topic I encouraged her to make the mural as big as she thought she could display in her home. We studied maps and the predominant colours of the landscape in each region. On a border around the map she wrote ‘Edna and Billy’s Happy Holiday Adventures’ The map provoked interest and Edna’s was pleased by the result. Following this she made tile pictures based on Scottish landscapes. Others chose flower images. Brenda made several large panels for relatives. “They’ll never believe I’ve made them, I can’t believe I’ve made them” she said.



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The work done by Annette – attracted further funding from Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales which allowed for extra work to be developed alongside the Hopes Dreams and Aspirations Project. This led to a new project “The ‘Bedtime Quilt’” The bedtime Quilt involved people in conversations about childhood bedtimes, goodnight saying and bedtime routines. It began with my recognition that a new person, Marian, dressed with a particular eye for texture. I invited her to print in wet clay using stamps and rollers I’d made and collected. I then looked for a form to rationalise her work. As the results looked like fabric I offered a tile cutter that would create hexagons, enabling us to make a clay patchwork. From this the notion of hexagons the quilt, the bed and bedtime routines and sayings emerged. Sheila told us about sleeping with nine brothers and sisters in a bed and many other people contributed stories and sayings. Many other people contributed saying and those that have been used are only the tip of the iceberg. I hope that once on the wall the ‘bedtime quilt’ will generate many more conversations with people of all ages. The design emerged from this process. Designing, tile printing and cutting, figurative clay tile work, glazing and mosaic making were the clay techniques that enabled all who wished to take part. Almost finished, the project will be displayed in the centre in the near future. Approximately 20 people have been involved in working on the ‘Quilt’ to date with many more in conversation about bedtime sayings.”

Artist’s Feedback

Annette described her role at the centre as being “to involve as many people as possible in ceramic work, while ensuring that their involvement was personally meaningful, satisfying and of an aesthetic standard. In the process I aspired to raise the spirits and aspirations of those who took part and hoped that their mental and physical health would be positively affected.”



She felt that her role had been clear from the start and hadn’t changed over the period. She felt that she was part of a team and that was very satisfying. She commented however that her understanding of the effect of dementia, other ailments and conditions of old age has deepened due to the fact that a greater number of people attending the centre have impaired memory. “My consequent challenge has been to find ways of making the experience of ceramic making possible, relevant and enjoyable to people while retaining the aesthetic quality of the result.”

Annette felt that the work had achieved most of the initial aims although she identified the problem of balance between reaching as many people as possible and spending enough time with each individual.

“It feels right to work with as many people as possible but in reality I think a useful balance has been achieved between the number of people and the length of time each person is engaged in ceramic work. Sometimes very difficult when a person who can only participate on a one to one basis is so keen to continue, has his ideas to work ready but the work with him would imply that others would not have the opportunity to participate.”

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Annette identified a number of moments which were memorable;

- When Edna had the confidence to create a large tile panel.
- When Brenda first saw her tile panels and was amazed at her ability. This influenced others to participate
- When John Woods intense pleasure in his elephant and in others appreciation of his work; any moment when people are thrilled to achieved much more than they believed they could and are keen to go on to the next project.
- When Derek asked to take clay home then returned with two stamps to make patterns on the quilt tiles. It is satisfying when any person connects the work at the Centre with their life at home, collecting photos or images, making work for friends or relations.
- When we evolve or hatch ideas and make design decisions together, such as in the ‘Bedtime Quilt’. When people through successful work, see themselves as able to learn new skills and then look forward to the future as a maker.

Annette felt that she herself had gained great enjoyment from the project. “I feel privileged to spend time with some strong spirited people and have learned lessons in life from them. I have greater, understanding of infirmities of old age and how to support people. The challenge of the work has led me to invent new techniques and research new ceramic materials.”

She also felt that she had had very good, willing support from staff and practical collaborations with other artists.

Benefits to participants

Annette reported that people have brought to the project courage, energy, patience, stories, transferable skills, good humour. The work of some people has inspired others to take part in a ceramic or other projects offered at the centre.

“I believe that people who have worked together know each other much better and in some cases have built friendships. That people will be fitter, have exercised their minds, bodies and hands. Working on projects close to one’s heart strengthens a sense of personal identity and a sense of community from the group work. Making visible what one holds in your head through the use of your hands is a creative act that takes hope, courage, concentration, and trust in the support on offer. A successful piece of work confirms those qualities that people may then be able to apply to other areas of their lives.



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Annette identified that certain people had improved their self esteem and raised their expectations of self. She felt they were on an upward spiral, knowing that new skills and new interests can be learned and enjoyed. She also felt that many people's mental wellbeing and physical health has improved from the stimulation offered by the project.

Many people have had a lot of fun and for those who have felt great loss of health and strength it has raised their spirits. Some working with me have said of the session, "I don't know where the time went." I believe this is important for people who find that time usually passes too slowly.

Thoughts for the future

"Although there are many benefits in working in a multi purpose room there have been times when the volume of music or other activity has made it almost impossible to hold necessary conversations." This issue has now been resolved by creative management of the spaces used for activities. Annette tried running sessions in the upstairs craft room, but found that participants were reluctant to leave the main space. The dining room which is directly adjacent to the main hall was offered as a work space for Annette and this has proved to be successful. On days when Annette uses this space, the service users have lunch in the main hall so she doesn't need to clear up half way through.

4 Feedback from Year 3

4.1 – Textiles with Sally Southern

Sally Southern is a textile artist and community art worker based in the North East of England. She has written several craft books and regularly contributes to craft magazines, designs children's fashion and furnishing fabrics and produces her own work from her studio in Cullercoats.



Sally describes her role at The Grange as being to provide textile based arts and craft activities, aimed mainly at service users who don't usually join in with group activities. The type of activities and the work produced was open to change and modification depending on the abilities and interests of the participants, although producing artwork to be exhibited at The Grange was always a priority. She felt that her role didn't

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change as the project progressed but the type of work produced changed as she tried to make it accessible for all participants.

“I was one of three artists working on the same theme (along with a photographer and a singer/storyteller) and we’d hoped combine our work in some way, however our individual work schedules prevented us from being at the centre at the same time.”

“Although working as part of a team with the other two artists didn’t quite work as planned I felt that the support given by the other staff at the centre was second to none. I was made to feel very much part of the day centre.”



Sally felt that she had achieved what she set out to do, working with two regular groups of participants who joined in week after week. She found that many had little or no art experience and low confidence at the start, but this increased as they developed their skills. Sally felt that the final pieces of work they produced gave them a lot of pride.

“The whole project was an absolute joy to work on and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the participants, and watching their confidence grow. I was delighted with the work they produced and the pride they got from their work. We took them to see an exhibition of knitted sculpture at a local gallery and that was a very enjoyable experience.”

“Personally I have learnt a lot about different ways of working with the elderly and people with less physical abilities (e.g. Arthritis), and how important it is to keep encouraging them. I feel very privileged to have been able to build relationships with many of them, and enjoyed witnessing the progress of their skills.”

Benefits to participants

Sally highlighted that one of the biggest benefits to participants was the social aspect of the group which allowed them a relaxed atmosphere to chat as they worked, and get to know each other more. She saw confidence grow from a starting point where people were happy to watch, to a genuine interest in taking part, with help and assistance where needed. She felt that people’s confidence grew along with their skills

“I feel that the participants really benefitted from the experience. As I’ve said, most didn’t join in with any other activities, so getting them to come and work with me each week was in itself quite an achievement. Many began just by

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watching what we were doing, more often than not saying that they didn't think they would be able to join in. With a little time and encouragement they began to take part themselves with my help and produce various forms of textile art. I made sure that much of the artwork was free for them to take home with them and keep, and they really enjoyed showing it to their friends and families."

The accessibility of the project benefitted the participants;

"I made sure that everyone could join in, no matter what their capabilities. Any parts that they couldn't physically do themselves I would help with. Even if all they could do was choose fabrics to use and designs to use then they could still take part. I found out what they enjoyed doing (for example, sewing, knitting, dressmaking) and tried to include elements of this into the projects."

Sally felt that the project was very well resourced. As much of the project was open to change due to the abilities and interest of the participants she was able to adapt the sessions as they went along, and the resources were always available to do so. "The staff provided great help and support, and hopefully I have left them in a position to continue much of the work we did by themselves. (for example, silk painting and fabric collage). I don't think there is anything that would have helped improve the project."

"The project was very flexible, which was essential for this type of work. I wanted it to be largely led by the participants in saying what they wanted to do, and much was trial and error to find topics that they all enjoyed and were able to do. I reported back to Michele Wright, and she was brilliant in her attitude towards the project. The brief was very open to allow me to encourage the participants to join in and to keep their interest. The staff and management were fantastic in their support."

Sally felt that it would have been good to work more closely with the other artists, (though their individual work schedules prevented this) however, she didn't feel that this hindered the project. With hindsight she felt that if the three artists had worked together, it may have put off some of the participants she worked with.

4.2 – Creative writing and singing with Celia Bryce

Celia Bryce is a writer, musician and song writer and she began her involvement at The Grange in 2009, by sitting in on as many of the day to day activities of the Day Centre as possible; joining in with the other the artists, chatting with various participants whilst they tried out pottery or textile work. She visited on different days over a number of weeks, sometimes staying for the whole day just to get the feel of the place and to become a familiar face. She began by chatting with people who hadn't particularly displayed an interest in writing. "General chatting and finding out about each other was my initial aim, testing the water, to see if I could generate interest in writing. In a way I tried to demystify the craft, to pull writing across from the seemingly academic to the every day, to make it accessible to those who might not have had a good experience with writing, say at school, or at work, or who have never really thought they 'could' write."

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“Lawrence Brown and Norman Scott were happy to chat and for me to take notes and together to try and make short pieces of poetry from our discussions. From there came the first attempts at poetry one of which ended up as ‘Let George Have his Apple’, the pit pony song, which both Norman and Lawrence helped to shape. Lawrence has since died. Taking this initial piece to another table, (after the whole centre had joined in singing it), the poem ‘There’s a Song in Everybody’ was born, with the whole table chipping in with words and lines. That is still a poem. Taking this to another table I worked with Derek McEnroe, and ‘When I was a Little Lad’ a poem and later a song about depression was created.”

Celia reported that this process took a number of weeks and months. She kept up her involvement with the Centre’s other activities and on an all-day walking session with service users the poem ‘The Road I used to Walk’ was created using words and phrases gleaned from participants. The poem was displayed via a big screen, along with photographs of the day, and everyone joined in the reciting of it. The poem still needs a melody but the words can be found on The Grange arts website.



“From the initial writing of poems, and then songs, we realised that people really wanted to sing. Not just occasionally when an entertainer came in, but regularly. In answer to this need we started the Friday afternoon singing corner, where those interested in singing gathered on a weekly basis. The numbers ranged from ten to eighteen on any given afternoon and included Gordon, Hughie, Aline, Marion, Pat, both Normans at times and Eddie, whilst newcomers to the centre were encouraged to join in. This was a very useful for newcomers, because they could very simply join in with words to refer to and singing something well known. It proved to be a great ice-breaker for new, nervous, under-confident people.”

Celia reported that the singing group started as a discrete group with people gathered around the specific singing table, moving from the ‘security’ of their own tables and their friends. They began by trying to add new words to existing songs and Celia found that this worked in a very small way, but did prove a little confusing to some, and Celia felt that she didn’t want to jeopardise the new found confidence of those who hadn’t been used to singing. Gradually Celia found that people not involved directly were becoming involved indirectly, singing along whilst playing dominoes or cards, or whilst engaged in other arts activities, such as pottery or textile art. Occasional ‘whole-centre’ singing took place to coincide with St Patrick’s Day, D Day and with visiting Ukele band and jazz trio, and Celia found that the small discrete group was too big for one corner and so now the whole centre is taken over with singing on Friday afternoons and music based quiz/activities on Friday mornings.

“New material such as ‘Poppa’s got a head like a ping-pong ball’ and rounds, table-by table singing, and adding new verses, or remembered verses to songs like ‘The Quartermasters’ store’, helps to keep these sessions lively. The use of percussion instruments, clapping etc whilst singing multiplies the tasks for

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everyone, exercising those parts of the brain which aren't exercised when just sitting reading, or talking, or sleeping. Interestingly those who don't read the words to songs, for whatever reason will listen or join in when they can but also love to have a percussion instrument to play."

Celia reported that there is other writing work still to complete (which may become songs) based around pottery, textile art and photographs, the work of the other artists. "During the summer holidays I have gone back to doing creative writing work, and have produced a booklet of writing already produced and remembered poems by those who joined in the sessions, spin-offs, if you like. These booklets will hopefully encourage people who wouldn't normally try it out, to have a go. Meanwhile the singing sessions continue with over forty people participating."

The initial work with Celia Bryce has led to an opportunity to attract further funding, a grant from Awards for All to develop 'Singing for the brain.' This was possible when staff at The Grange recognised how valuable the singing was for service users, and saw the need to develop it further.

4.3 – Photography with Sharon Bailey

Sharon is a photographer who has been working in The Grange on Friday mornings with individuals rather than groups and many of those who attend the centre on Fridays have taken part.

"I was asked to use photography at the Grange to engage as wide a group of people as possible and to be part of the project – hopes, dreams and aspirations- along with two other artists Sally and Celia. My session ran for two hours from 10.30 until 12.30. From the start I was keen to try to involve people who don't normally engage in activities. I was also keen to ensure that though undoubtedly the work I made contained reminiscences from people reflecting on their lives I wanted also to look at the here and now and that this related more to the project theme."

Sharon said that she had wanted to work with The Grange for some time as she felt that they clearly had a huge respect for artists and valued the impact they can make on people. She felt that Michele respected her work as an artist, having seen other projects, and from the start it was clear to her that she would be given free reign to develop work that she and the individuals found interesting. She recognised that it was the meaningful engagement during the sessions that was important as well as producing the end result.

"At the start, I didn't expect people to want to take photographs, this is generally the case, though occasionally there are individuals that want to. I wanted to take and use photographs as a trigger to start people talking to me about their lives and experiences and then to make new pictures using their photos and words. I wasn't sure how these would be presented."

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Sharon reported that the artists all met at the beginning and had some initial ideas about how they could work together. At the outset there was an aspiration to try to dovetail some aspects of the three projects together but this proved difficult. The main problem for Sharon was that for the majority of the time she only had Fridays available and Sally worked on Wednesdays.



“I saw Celia a little as she did Friday afternoons but the singing became very popular and although I documented this with pictures and video it wasn't possible to combine writing and photography. Michele seemed unconcerned about this though and encouraged us to carry on and do our sessions regardless. She fully understands that projects can shift and change.”

“For the later sessions I started to work with Celia in a couple of ways, as our sessions overlapped on Fridays. I made videos of some of the singing sessions, which will be used as DVD's for individuals to give to their families and friends. I was particularly trying to capture those people where the benefits of the singing sessions were more apparent, those who have difficulty expressing themselves coherently using words but when singing are lucid and clear to highlight the effects of the 'singing for the brain'. I also have been placing images with poems that have been written by the writing group at Grange. The plan is to run sessions with the Celia and the group to make a big book of words and pictures using Blurb, self designed books on-line. We'll be able to achieve this as our sessions continue after the end of this phase of the project.”

Sharon felt that she has achieved what she set out to do and in a way she achieved more than she had anticipated. She knew that it would take a long time to get to know all the clients/users in the centre and that it would be important to do this;

“I engaged with people in various ways. I made portraits with many people, made these into cards and then pasted these into a large book. Over time I added words about the individual – either their own or that other people said about them. I'm continually adding to this. Some of the portraits have been made into new pictures using words and objects and are being framed. I documented activities that took place at the centre or outside using photography and video – the singing sessions, abseiling, Newburn fun day, sponsored walk. People brought in damaged old pictures- pictures of family, weddings, children, which I restored and made copies of. I made a couple of video portraits. I am putting together a book of a walk.”

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Sharon described how she decided to work with individuals rather than with groups and to work with as many people as possible, especially those that normally don't engage. To do this she needed to spend more time getting to know people and building up rapport and trust. Some mornings could be spent talking to one or two individuals. This approach of working with individuals has had its difficulties as it means lots of ideas and threads are generated. Sharon felt that it was hard to successfully balance the process and the product.



“Designing books, inputting website, editing film and editing and photo-shopping images made during sessions is very time consuming. I have a lot of images, films, words and ideas that I've not had chance to do anything with.”

Sharon also felt that she spent a lot of time getting to know people but felt that this has paid off as her project continued. She found that the sessions with Celia were more successful than expected and there are many ways she can see to carry on collaborating beyond this project.

“At the very end of the project I had a trip to South Africa to explore international collaboration using photography. I was keen to try to link with The Grange when I was out there and was able to connect, via a Skype video call, on one of the Fridays. I chatted with some of the people at Grange and introduced them to some South African colleagues as well as a writer from the North East, Val McLane. She was there developing a two women play with a SA actress and launching a book of women stories. The actress Nomhkle said hello to the group and sang a traditional SA song to them. This has sewn the seeds for a new collaboration with Val at the day centre and possibly the start of The Grange's first international project.”

Memorable moments from the project

Sharon reported that some of the more spontaneous moments that take place in the good atmosphere of The Grange are wonderful. She cited a few examples:

- Bill being allowed to play the piano when inspired was lovely and I videoed and photographed him along with some impromptu dancing.
- Talking to Alec and discovering that he has a horde of digital still and video cameras, which he's hardly ever used, and then sessions showing him how to use them.

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- Photographing Jenny and Edna together and starting a conversation about their fathers and then seeing them spend the next two hours chatting and laughing together (they hadn't spoken before)
- A few individuals sharing some really sad moments with me about the death of loved ones – spouses and children.
- Ingrid bringing in her hair that was cut off when she had her stroke for a photo shoot
- Documenting the abseiling and witnessing the bravery and pride of those that took part
- Having an email relationship with Jim even though he's stopped going to the centre (because he has a bad back)
- The wonderful music sessions, especially the early ones when a dozen or so were around the table and the spontaneous ballroom dancing, which I photographed and videos
- Lily reciting her poetry to me for a video
- Margaret being persuaded to get into a canoe on the Tyne when she was clearly scared witless and then videoing her enjoyment.
- The look of amazement on some of the people's faces when I said hello from South Africa over Skype.

Personal gain from the project

"It's a great privilege to work in an organisation that puts so much value on the benefits of working with artists. I have a passion for working with older people and this, combined with the freedom I've been given, has made it a good project. I've been able to try a lot of different things and work flexibly without the constraint of having to produce a particular product. This has helped my work develop in a way that is not normally possible and so I am very grateful for that. I've met and now have connections with a lot of new people."

"It's also been good to see the range of other work that's been produced by the other artists and to share ways of working, concerns and ideas. Often I'm the only artist working on a project. This is one of the great things about working at the Grange. Working with older people can sometimes be difficult and stressful and it's important to be able to share this with others."

"I constantly am inspired by older people and working at the Grange over a longer than normal period has enabled me to make closer relationships with many wonderful people."

Roles and responsibilities

Sharon felt that her role and other people's roles had seemed clear generally. Everyone worked well together and there was a good team spirit. The others seemed

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supportive of what Sharon was doing, also she didn't get a chance to see Sally at all during her project due to the timetable and other commitments.

She described one small blip but asserts that it didn't have a marked affect on her work. Sue Woolhouse, a glass artist who had worked on the year one project was booked to come a work a few sessions to make a glass panel with the 'men's' table on a Friday morning for a few weeks, and Sharon hadn't been aware it was happening. This meant that a couple of things she had started had to be put on hold and then it was difficult to go back. But the bonus was that Sue coaxed some really interesting photographs from them, which Sharon is aiming to make use of.

In general Sharon felt that Michele as Centre Manager, is very good at communicating what is going on with the other artists and highlighting ideas that might be in the pipeline. She found the staff at The Grange very supportive of the artists and willing to offer their support if needed.

“In other places I've experienced conflict between some staff members and artists, usually because there isn't an understanding of what artists are able to contribute. This isn't the case at Grange.”

Benefits to participants

Sharon felt that the simplest benefit is that they have someone to talk to and to share their memories, ideas and thoughts. They have company and another person, as well as the other staff, to spend time with. The arts activities provide something to keep people engaged and active, and encourages them to communicate with others about their lives through memory using imagery. “Working with pictures triggers memories. I hope that making pictures and words with people makes them feel valued. Photographing and making cards for people of their achievements (like the abseiling) gives them a feeling of pride in what they are capable of.”

“Many people tell me that the pictures I give them are framed and on their mantelpieces or walls at home. Making pictures into cards is important because they can present or send them to members of their families. ‘Mending’ old and battered pictures and making copies of existing pictures keeps their memories alive in a tangible way and these are also often given away to family and friends.”

“The photography book that I have of many of people on a Friday and the videos I have shot helps some people, who have trouble remembering, to recollect what we talked about in previous conversations. As this book is passed around the tables they get to see and read about other people at The Grange on other tables, often people they haven't spoken to before.”

Sharon felt that being given the freedom by the project manager to spend time with people who don't normally get very involved is important. This type of project takes time, and sometimes they don't even get to make pictures but, this has not been perceived as a problem as it's the engagement that's recognised. Sharon felt that the individuals gained a lot from having someone giving them some concentrated time.

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“One man is very interested in photography and has a lot of digital and video cameras that he has hardly or never used. I’ve been able to show him how they work and he’s started to use them. We plan to make a video together.”

“It seems obvious to say but without the engagement, enthusiasm and interest of people at the centre I couldn’t produce anything! Everything I make needs their involvement and agreement. The people I’ve met and spent time with have given of their time freely and generously.”

Project Resources

Initially, Sharon didn’t have on-line access within the building and this caused a few setbacks, but this has now been rectified and has been very useful when in conversation people mention things and she is now able to look them up quickly on-line to keep the dialogue going and to extend the conversation. Sharon was pleased that once the importance of the need for online access was recognised, it was sorted and was invaluable when she went to South Africa, as she was able to speak to the service users using Skype. Sharon felt that access to a scanner and printer would also be useful, and this was also sorted for her.

Management and Organisation

Sharon felt that the project was well organised and the staff at The Grange are very supportive and helpful. She thought that it was a fantastic place for an artist to work and that Michele as project manager is inspirational and very well networked. Sharon felt that she was kept well informed and she tried to speak regularly to both Michele and Richard about how things were going.

“I’m always critical of the work I do on a project! This time I feel I perhaps didn’t get the balance right between spending time working with people during the sessions and then making these into artworks. I found it hard to go to the centre and not to engage with the people and so de-prioritised making the finished pieces. Sometimes I would go in to edit a video or book and end up doing other things. (I knew I could spend some sessions at home to finish work off but digital photography and video is very time consuming and I’d never have been in!!) I need to be stricter about this and perhaps start fewer things. Knowing that in the long term I’ll be able to use a lot of this material, as my project carries on, has helped.”

Suggestions for future projects

“Although we didn’t manage to work together that much when I did spend time with Celia in her music project it was very enjoyable and I was able to document the activity with pictures and video. I think we could develop this in the future. We’ve also started to put words and pictures together and again I think if we could spend more time together we could do some interesting things.”



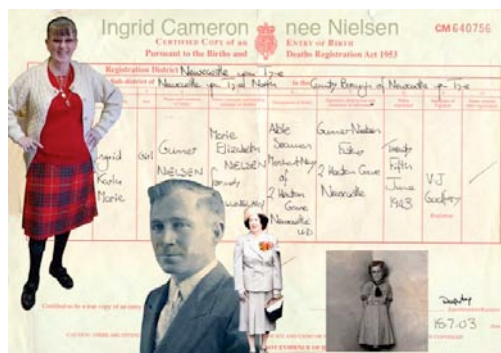
Sharon has been integral in identifying funding for a development of the original project involving a link with South Africa.

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“I took along a group of people from The Grange to see the exhibition Coming of Age and a lot of conversation was generated by the artworks they saw. It is a mixed abilities group, some with mild dementia and others with physical difficulties. One of the pieces, by Susan Hiller, particularly generated a lot of conversation between them, a work inspired by Hiller’s grandmothers Rose and this started us to think about a project where we explored women in their own lives.”

“A few months before I had been working in South Africa, where I met actress and screenwriter Val McLane, as part of a cultural exchange project with the North East. Last year she produced a book depicting women’s lives from a small township in Eastern Cape, which she launched when I was there. I conceived a project where we would make a similar publication. This project is being developed as my next project ‘Coming of Age’ at The Grange. I’m also hoping that we may be able to find support for myself and Michele to travel to South Africa to look at the possibility of starting an international collaboration.”

“Through recorded conversations, both group and individuals, the groups stories are being written down, edited and put alongside photographs, a mixture of old and recent. The group have brought in lots of wonderful old pictures and I will be setting up a portrait studio to take pictures of them now. The women are describing their parents and grandparents, talking about childhood experiences through to the present day. They have been speaking about their experience of being here at the centre and the importance it plays in their lives. We aim to have at least twelve stories with pictures.”



“One hope is that, once printed, the book will be taken to South Africa during Val’s next trip when she is performing her play at Grahamstown Festival in June. It will be shared with the women who were involved in her previous book project. We hope that this will be the start of a connection between these women, who are from very different cultures but who have however shared some similar experiences, by the very fact of them being women.”



“Some women from Grange are also knitting squares, which will form a series of hangings for the backdrop of the show in Grahamstown. We are currently exploring ways for myself and centre manager to raise funds to travel out to South Africa in June to research future collaboration there.”



5 Centre Manager's Feedback, Michele Wright

Michele Wright, as Centre Manager reported that the first year of the project involved artist Sue Woolhouse working with residents to create a steel and glass fence outside the building. This phase of the project is not included in this evaluation.

In year two, the elders were introduced to a new ceramicist, Annette Poulson who worked to help people express themselves through clay. Through previous projects people have demonstrated how much they enjoy the process of making one-off, personal items in ceramic, where they are involved from start to finish.

Year three has involved three different artforms with three artists who were engaged to work alongside each other in the grange. The artists started off by meeting together to look at joint themes but soon separated off into their own areas although still benefitting from the contact together.

Re: Ceramics with Annette Poulson

Michele felt that Annette the ceramic artist had picked up well from the work which had been started by the previous ceramic artist and had brought her own approach and personality to the work at The Grange. The work that she did attracted funding from Lloyds TSB Foundation which allowed her to work an extra day per week and this work ran alongside and overlapped the Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations for a short while. The Lloyds TSB work still continues and has been a direct result of the Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations project.

Michele has received positive feedback from many service users but in particular from one participant's son who felt that the work had been so valuable to his father that he has promised to write a letter of support to help attract future funding. He felt that "The artists are not just artists they are wonderful people."

Another key example of the value of the ceramics work is John's story and the difference it has made to him. John spent his working life as a handyman helping out friends in the street and always being in a position to help. When he had a stroke his life was changed dramatically as he couldn't continue to be the man he had been helping everyone out.

"Working with Annette, at first reluctantly, he decided he would like to make a ceramic elephant. Annette worked out a way whereby John could instruct her to help with his work since he could not use his hand. The elephant was wonderful and John was very pleased and proud. It was included in the exhibition held at the Civic Centre in 2010. This required Annette to carefully wrap it and transport it to and from the event as the piece was irreplaceable. Visitors at the opening event were drawn to the elephant and the Director of Social Services made a point about it in his speech. As he was speaking, John started to shout as his picture came up by co-incidence in the slide show. He has no speech but he managed to stop the whole room."

Michele felt that Annette was very good to work with;

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“She’s so lovely – I never thought that I’d be happy with the replacement of Jane – but she has the practical skills but also the theory. She is learning all the time about working with people with dementia. In her work with service users for example she identified that Marion really likes symmetry – and someone else doesn’t but she likes balance. This is really interesting as it may be that these discoveries can be used to help with other aspects of people’s lives.”

Michele felt that this residency has encouraged people to be even more creative and brave, to work through the process from a more imaginative and personal angle.

Re: Textiles with Sally Southern

Michele felt that she had had positive feedback from Sally and is very pleased with what she said.

Sally has had all sorts of contributors – people who were easy to motivate but also others who are less easy to engage, especially when she started the fabric collage and not just sewing. She found it was useful to use glue as some people were having trouble with the needles.

Michele was impressed with Sally’s open-ness to ideas and change. She saw that she was very flexible and was able to run with whatever take-up she had. Michele was pleased with the fact that it was a nice informal group who ‘didn’t even know they were doing art.’

Re: Creative writing and singing with Celia Bryce

Michele reported that Celia started with a project based around creative writing but it has developed with a focus on singing the words they have written. (Celia also runs ‘singing for the brain’ for the Alzheimers society and has brought some of that expertise to this project too.)

“The atmosphere is ‘WOW’ and the results are amazing. Acceptance of the project has grown over the months and aside from the core group of participants, staff found that many people in the large room were joining in and singing along. Celia quickly found ways of including them using maracas and other percussion instruments so that even those who can read the words of the new songs can join in the experience. Movement stimulates different parts of the brain and people find they can remember all the words. One participant with short term memory loss went home and came back with lists of songs that they could work with.”

Norman, one of the participants, said “when I sing, I feel like myself again.”

Michele is happy that the creative writing work has progressed into singing and feels that it is still focussed on writing of the songs to sing. She feels that the input from Celia is not at all like what happens when an entertainer comes in to sing. When that happens, most people don’t participate, it’s just something happening to them rather than involving engagement, same old songs and singing along with a backing tape. There is no comparison with what Celia does with the group. Celia has been working with the whole room.

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This project more than any has shown that one thing leads to another. The initial work with Celia has led to an opportunity to attract further funding, a grant from Awards for All to develop 'Singing for the brain.' This was made possible when staff at The Grange recognised how valuable the singing was for service users, and they were able to apply for and attract new funding.'

Re: Photography with Sharon Bailey

Michele has been very impressed with Sharon's ability to involve people who do not usually engage; Sharon has been going round the tables where many people just sit and chat. Michele felt that Sharon was concerned initially about not producing an end product, a wall hanging or a window as artists projects often do. This was mainly due to the personal nature of the work and the fact that people were taking their photos home. Michele felt that a lot of artists are used to having an end product and for everyone to participate in the same way and at the same time. At the Grange, often artists discover that it can take a long time to establish;- but that's the advantage of a long project.

Apart from the occasional issue about overlap of activities, work with Sharon has developed very smoothly. Michele was aware that on occasion, staff might book an activity in and not be aware of how it can impact on the artist who is working with a group. "We feel we are offering more choices for people on the day but if someone was involved in something particular – and the artist was planning to follow it up that week, it can be disruptive. In the particular instance, Sue and Sharon could both only make that day. Their work was in some ways very similar so we hope they were able to share the ideas that came up.

Michele reported that, as a direct result of the Hopes Dreams and Aspirations project, Sharon is developing a new project at The Grange, called Coming of Age. She has attracted extra funding from Newcastle University and The Grange has identified funds from Northern Rock to support the work. Michele is very excited about the international dimension to the new project and the fact that it is broadening horizons for service users. Service Users are sharing their thoughts and photographs with Sharon and actress Val McLane and the work will be included in Val's performance in South Africa.

Profiling the work and reaching a wider audience

Michele reported that the Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations project has enabled her to make good contacts with the Arts Council Directors who came to The Grange as part of a tour to see the exemplary artwork. In addition local MP's have been made aware of the work. Recent exhibition opportunities have included inclusion in the show 'Better than a Pill' at Newcastle Civic Centre in 2010 which celebrated creativity and ageing showing some of the best work created over the past few years by older people in the region. The participants had worked with artists in a variety of settings – day centres, residential care homes and in the community. A selection of this work, including some from The Grange, was then shown at the Central Library in Newcastle in February 2011

During year 3 of Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations all three artists have been able to develop their work and start on new projects with separate funding, but in each case these projects could not have happened without the support from Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations.

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Staff feedback - Richard Shirbon

My involvement has been to support people physically and/or with encouragement in trying the ceramics and Textile workshops and the photography, many people who attend have low self-esteem and people with physical disabilities and mental health difficulties are often conditioned to the assumption that they can't do that, or that these activities are somehow not for them. Our role as workers in the centre is in part to work with people in challenging themselves and building skills and confidence, which increased self-worth, self-esteem and promotes increased levels of independence.

The benefits for the staff are that we are obviously learning skills from the artists in taking part in the activity and also seeing new approaches in working with people, as the artists have much experience in this area, we all value the knowledge and experience they bring. We also now have a deeper knowledge of the people we support, this is because these different activities and the different conversations people have shown other areas of the individuals personality, and often leads to discussions of memories – and this knowing of a person is where much of the 'job satisfaction' you get from care work comes from.

The benefits to The Grange are vast. It projects a positive image for the centre by using such skilled artists and is of huge value for the service users. We have are delighted at the range of activities they can be involved in, this helps us help more people by inspiring peoples interest, especially for new comers to the service. This in turn raises the profile of the centre. We have included work in exhibitions, been in various magazines and papers, and it reflects an image of ageing which is not usually seen. For the people involved, their families and the wider public, this is hugely important for changing stereotype attitudes and expectations of ageing.

Issues from or which affect these projects are minimal, mainly the sound in the hall (main area where people sit) has been too difficult for people to hear conversations etc. This was easy to resolve by re-locating the activity into another room, and we are able to see the potential for this happening again and take action to prevent it in future. Chemicals used in the art projects have needed a COSHH Risk Assessment – which are not problematic to organize.

The work fits the centre perfectly, because all the work reflects the group taking part – there could be no wrong. There is such a sense of ownership on each wall of the centre through peoples work been on display, and the involvement of family through discussions and video/pictures makes the persons contributions all the more valued. The styles of the projects have (as stated) all come from the group, with the artist there to assist and explore ideas individuals have, the projects follow the imagination and inspiration of the group, so the workshops may start as one thing but change half way through – which is great, having the service users in control of the projects ensures unique pieces of work and keeps the service/activities person centered.

The only recommendation I would make is to ensure we can document the details through pictures/video as we have had so many special moments with many people enjoying these activities.

6 Achieving the aims

The project has been assessed and analysed against the aims which were set out in the funding application

At the outset, the following aims were set;

- To help identify and celebrate existing and new skills
- To increase the feelings of self-worth/esteem and self-confidence of individuals
- To help fight disuse (both mental and physical)
- To encourage active participation in the arts
- To raise older peoples public profile
- To further challenging service user's perceptions of their own abilities and continue to challenge the perceptions of elders' worth and abilities within the wider community.

In addition it was intended that information on this project would be added to the website grangearts.org.uk to facilitate an even wider audience base.

It appears that all the aims have been achieved and in some areas the project has achieved more than expected:

Participants have developed new skills, remembered and celebrated old ones. Artists have cited occasions when participants have remembered songs from way back, tried to play the piano after many years, brought in cameras to discuss and learn more about. Celia noticed that people wanted to sing – not just occasionally, but regularly, in a way that celebrates their own skills and their own history.

Participants feel proud of their work, sometimes when they didn't expect to. Families and friends have attested to the fact that individuals feel that what they have done has been worthwhile, they feel proud too of what their family member or friend has achieved. All the artists reported that the work appeared to boost peoples feeling of self worth and self confidence – for example if someone wants to take your photo and listen to your story – that gives a sense of being valued.

Working on arts projects, learning a new skill when other abilities are fading has been of immense value to help fight disuse of both mental and physical abilities.

The projects were designed to attract participation from people who don't see themselves as arty or creative and the artists approach has helped to encourage people who don't often take part in any of the activities on offer.

Exhibitions within the Centre and outside (in the Civic Centre and) have ensured that not only the work of these individuals is valued by those who know them but that the profile of older people is raised substantially by showing the wonderful examples from the Grange.

The project has helped to remind family members of their own relative's abilities and skills, both past and present and has raised awareness within the wider community of The Grange.

Credits

Photographs

All photographs are by The Grange with the exception of photos on pp 14-18 which are by Sharon Bailey.

Management

Michele Wright

Funded by

The Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations Project is financially supported by the Kellett Fund at Community Foundation.

Artists included:

Artists have included Sue Woolhouse, Annette Poulson, Celia Bryce, Sally Southern and Sharon Bailey. All participants are elders who use services at The Grange Day Centre, Newburn Road, Throckley, Newcastle upon Tyne. Other images of this and other projects can be viewed on their Web site www.grangearts.org.uk

For further information about this project please contact:

Michele Wright
Centre Manager
The Grange Day Centre
Newburn Road
Throckley
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE15 9AF
Tel: 0191 267 3728
Fax: 0191 229 0503
www.grangearts.org.uk

Report prepared by :

Pauline Taylor
Infinite Arts
17 Nile Street
Sunderland
SR1 1EY
www.infinitearts.co.uk